DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 173 SO 022 457

AUTHOR	Johnson, Jennifer, Ed.
TITLE	[Pearl Harbor.]
REPORT NO	ISSN-0361-3577
PUB DATE	92
NOTE	146p.; Photographs may not reproduce well. Published by Loblolly Inc., students at Gary High School, TX.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT	Loblolly Magazine; v19 n1 Win 1992
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	High Schools; High School Students; Interviews; *Local History; *Oral History; Social Studies; *Student Publications; United States History; World History; *World War II
IDENTIFIERS	*Pearl Harbor; *Texas (East); USS Arizona

ABSTRACT

This issue of "Loblolly Magazine" was written in observance of the 50th anniversary of the U.S. entrance into World War II. The publication features interviews conducted by East Texas high school students with Clarence Otterman, one of the few survivors of the crew of the USS Arizona, which was bombed during the attack on Pearl Harbor, and with a variety of East Texans who were involved in the war, including those who saw active duty and those who remained at home. Numerous black and white photographs illustrate the articles. (DB)

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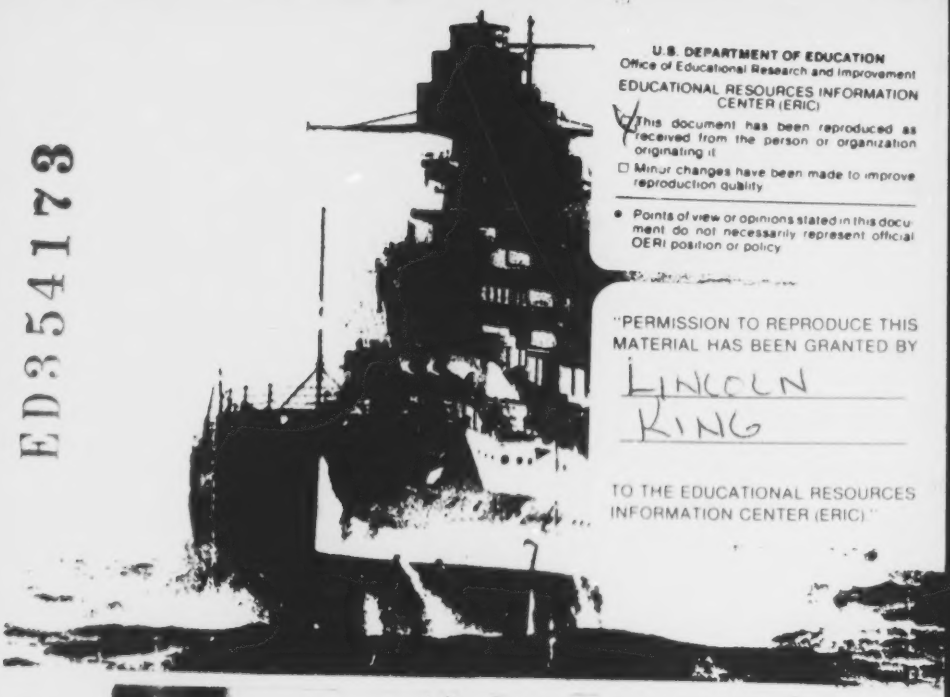

USS Arizona Before & After

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This issue of Loblolly is to observe the 50th anniversary of America's entry into World War II. That event came with the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 by the Japanese Navy.

We previously featured an interview with Jamie Murphy, of Carthage, was who was with the Navy in Hawaii on that day. This time we are leading off the magazine with a visit with Clarence Otterman of Center, Texas in next door Shelby County. During the attack on Pearl Harbor, close to 2,500 Americans were killed. Over half of these were stationed on Mr. Otterman's ship, The U.S.S. Arizona. He was one of the few survivors of the crew. He not only lived through the day but went on to serve to retirement with the Army. He is also the father of our school librarian, Donna Porter.

In this issue we have also interviewed a variety of East Texans who were involved in World War II. Some served the United States in far areas of the earth. Others played a more quiet role on the Home Front. It was a conflict which involved everyone, and we wanted to share the remembrances of these people with you.

Jeniffer Johnson
Loblolly Editor

Cover Photo: Clarence Otterman's ship- the battleship U.S.S. Arizona - shown in its proud days before World War II - and after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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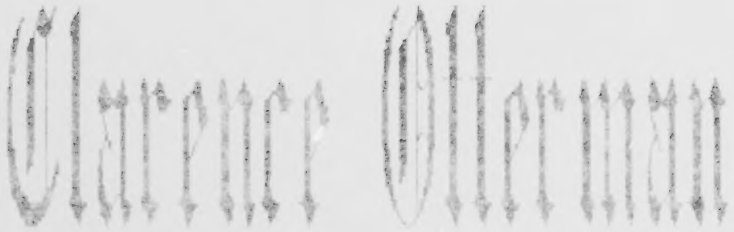
Loblolly Magazine published by Loblolly Inc., students at Gary High School, Box 189, Gary, Texas 75643. Circulation is by subscription and newsstand. Subscriptions are $6.00 a year, single copies, $3.00. Some back issues are available. Copyright 1991 by the Loblolly Inc.



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Clarence Otterman is the father of our school librarian, Donna Porter. He was at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 when the Japanese attacked, and started World War II for America. He was assigned to the battleship, U.S.S. Arizona, at Pearl Harbor. The ship had a crew of 1400, and over 1200 were killed in the attack. This represented over half the Americans to die that day. Clarence Otterman went on to serve in the Military for 20 years, and then settled in East Texas where his wife had been born and grew up.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Traer, Iowa on Oct. 17, 1919. We lived on a farm when I was first born and later my family moved to the city. My Dad managed a Skelly gasoline station in Traer.

Q: Describe what it was like when you

were growing up.

A: Although I grew up during the depression, my father always had steady employment; I would call it a normal, happy childhood except for the long illness of my mother and the loss of her when I was only 17 years old. We were luckier than most of the people. One of my favorite chores as a young boy was helping my uncle mow the graveyard... we used push mowers back then and got a lot of exercise. When I was in high school my favorite subject was math. I loved all sports and was captain of our football team. I also participated in basketball and track. When I was a senior in High School, I got an athletic scholarship to a college, but I decided to join the Navy instead. I worked at a grocery store when I was in the 7th grade and made 50 cents a day... Coca cola was only 5 cents then.

Q: When and where did you join the Navy?

A: On October 4, 1939 I joined the Navy. I went to the Navy Training Station Office in Great Lakes, Illinois.

Q. Why did you join the Navy?

A: I had a friend that was in the Navy and I decided to join, too.

Q: Where did you go to bootcamp?

Clarence Otterman during World War II service.

A: Great Lakes, Ill.

Q: Describe what bootcamp was like.

A: It was very strict! We had to have a short hair cut, be cleaned shaven, shoes shined--rules were to be obeyed--not broken.

Q: What were your assignments prior to reporting aboard the U.S.S. ARIZONA?

A: After bootcamp, I requested assignment on the ARIZONA. It was a battleship. I traveled cross-country by train to Calf. where I then boarded the ARIZONA, my new home for the next two years. I started seaman 1st class and then went into gunners mate.

Q: Did you have any special interest?

A: I was on the ARIZONA's Football team and when we were in port we would play games. One happy memorable occasion was when the ARIZONA crossed the equator. The sailors that had never been across were called the polliwogs. After we were ``initiated'' we were called shellbacks. I was one. The ceremony was a long time Navy tradition to recognize sailors who were getting to sail the seas.

Q: What were you doing before Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: The ARIZONA had just docked in Pearl Harbor a few days before the attack. I was cleaning up and

getting the area ready for church services on the fantail of the ARIZONA. I looked up and saw planes flying. By a symbol on their wings, I recognized them as Japanese planes. At this time the bombs had already started falling. That was the biggest shock and surprise of life. Some of my buddies had shore leave the night before and were sleeping late. I ran down to the number 4 turret to wake them up and started yelling at them we were under attack. At first they didn't believe me, but finally did. We came back up on deck and the ship was engulfed in flames. A bomb had hit midsection and the and the ship broke in two. It had blown apart in an instant. We were ordered to abandon ship. Many were already killed and trapped below. From midship all the way forward to the bow the ship was on fire. The water around the ship was on fire where oil had been spilled. After we abandoned ship a friend and I got a motor launch at Ford Island and brought it back to pick up survivors. We got several into the boat, and one was so severely burned that his skin virtually slipped off. He died right after we got him to shore. We saved several, but many died in the burning water.

The friend that had talked me into

joining the Navy was on the U.S.S. Vestal which had been tied up to the ARIZONA. They had managed to cast off before the ARIZONA was hit. I had no knowledge of what had happened to him until several months afterwards. He survived and had no knowledge of me either. Clothes were issued and we stayed at the naval base at Pearl Harbor. Three days after the bombing, we were assigned to burial detail. Long trenches were dug in the cemetery, ``The Punch Bowl'', and each body was laid in a row, head to foot. Sticks with their ID tags, when available, were placed by the grave. Later crosses were put at the head of each grave. Elsewhere in the cemetery we buried three Japanese pilots that had been shot down. Soon after that, I was assigned to the U.S.S. WHITNEY and patrolled the shores and coast of Pearl Harbor. After being on the WHITNEY for several months, I was sent back to Washington to gunnery school. I was then sent to Orange, Texas where I joined the crew of a destroyer, the U.S.S. Murray, a ship which my future brother-in-law had helped to build at the shipyard there. I met and married my wife in Orange, too.

On the MURRAY, we went on a shakedown cruise to Cuba, and later went back into the Pacific where we were involved in most

Clarence Otterman before World War II.

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of the major battles. During one battle we were hit by a torpedo, but the ship survived. I received a commendation for outstanding performance because of my actions during this time. The MURRAY was sent back to the States for repair then returned to the Pacific and the fighting. On another occasion, we boarded a Japanese hospital ship going back to the Japanese Islands to check and make sure only wounded were being transferred back to Japan. Then the war ended while I was on the MURRAY. A Japanese submarine surfaced near our ship to surrender to us. I was one among 25 of the boarding party to check it out. We stayed on the sub all night. Other American sailors came the next morning and took over command where they went to the Japanese harbor. Peace was declared, but orders were given- if ``necessary'' shoot the enemy down in a ``friendly manner.''

Q: What happened after the war?

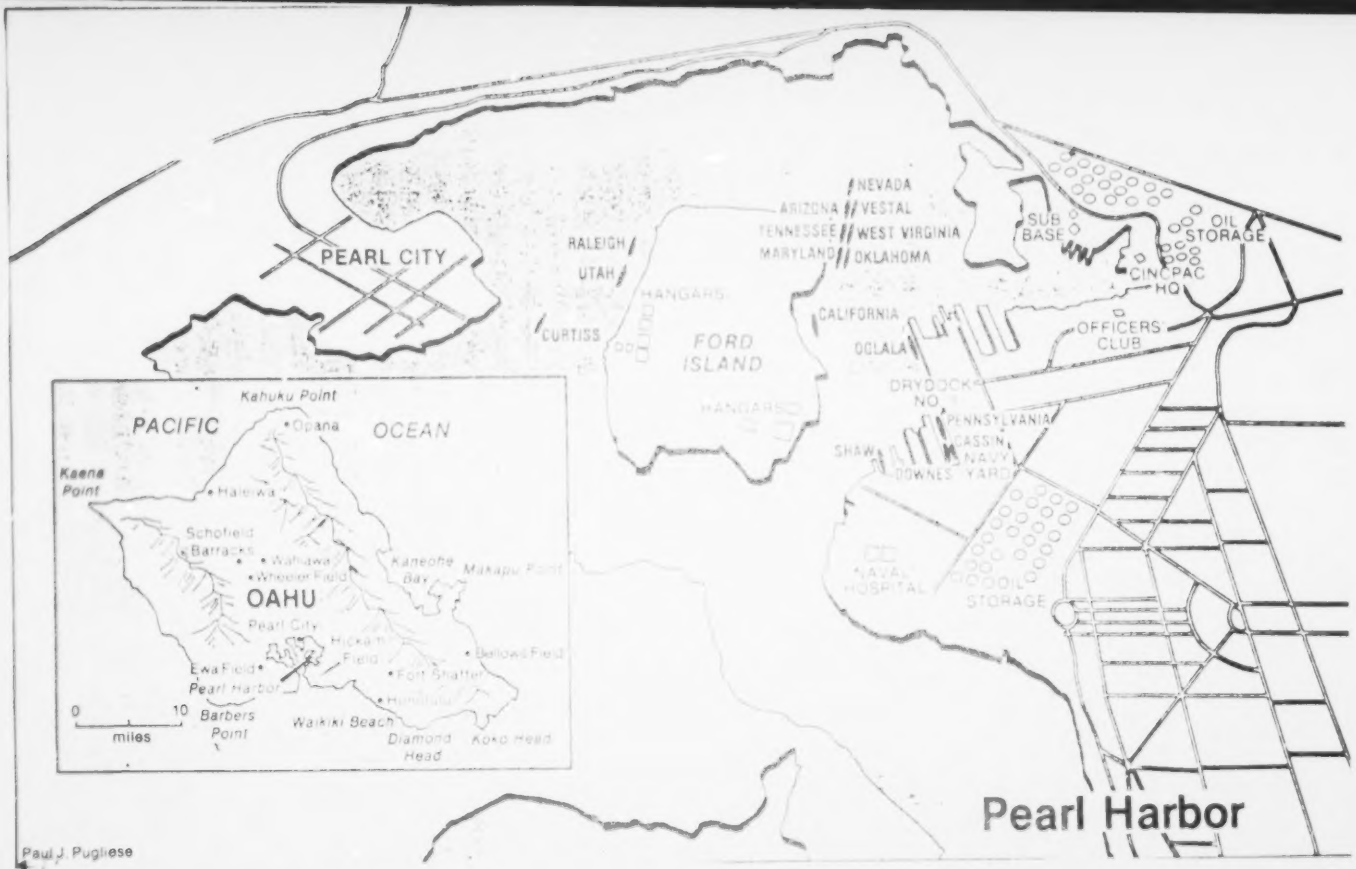
A: I finished out my 6 year enlistment time and got out of the Navy. I was a civilian for 2 years then decided to go back. I wanted to go back into the Navy, but I could not get my chief gunners mate rank back because the need was not there. However, the Army did offer me a good

deal so I went in the Army. I retired as a Sgt. Major after a total of 20 years in the service.

A: After you retired what happened?

Q: I settled in Texas and was hired as a policeman with the Center Texas Police Dept. I also worked for a major chicken plant in the area. After this, I went back into law enforcement and later held the position as Chief of Police of Center. After serving several years as chief, I decided to quit and take life easy, but was requested to take the position of City Judge of Center. I worked there for approximately two years and resigned. I was appointed to finish a term for the Justice of the Peace at Precinct 2 at Shelbyville, Tx. After the term was over, I retired at my farm home in Clever Creek Community where I now enjoy visits from my five wonderful daughters and their families and I was blessed to have survived the ARIZONA. I have kept in contact with several of my buddies that were on the ARIZONA with me. It is not known how many of the 187 survivors are still living. But, I'm working on it, to catch up on their news.

Q: What advice can you give todays young



Paul J. Pugliese

people?

A: America is a wonderful place. Young people should take pride in America and always be ready to fight and protect our country. Don't get involved in drugs--get an education-- -and trust in the Lord. In conclusion, I have a lot to thank the Lord for and pray for a world of peace.

Clarence Otterman after World War II-
as a Sergeant-Major in the Army.

Helen Underwood

Helen Underwood shared her remembrances of days in Carthage during World War II. It was a time of sacrifice and pain for many people. But people also learned to work together and support each other through difficult days. Helen Underwood saw her husband, J.R., off to war, and kept busy as a teacher during his overseas tour. And in time the war was over.

December 7, 1941, J.R.(my husband) and I were eating lunch with my parents, John and Opal Paley at Fairplay. I was teaching first grade in the Carthage Independent School District, and Monday morning, our Superintendent, Q.M. Martin let each room of the school listen to the President's message. President Roosevelt declared war and during his message I realized that J.R. would be drafted soon.

The greeting letter, from the President, came June 7, 1942. He was to report to the local board which was the local draft board. At 7:30 A.M. June 17, 1942. His order number was 1057 Class 1A. J.R. and his father, R.F. Underwood, owned a cotton gin and during

the spring months operated a tomato shed. This business, of buying the tomatoes, packing and shipping, was to many parts of the states. This industry was important since this county depended largely on agricultural products. J.R. was given a month to get this business finished. He was to report for induction on July 17, 1942. He finished the business and on July 13, 1942, he and a friend, Warren Duron, enlisted in the Air Force. They deported from Shreveport, LA., for Camp Beauregard after five days. Then he was to be sent for his basic training.

All moving of service men was by troop train and very secretive. But on his way to the troop train he passed a man and gave him a note, which was to me, and asked the man to call me. He did, and in the note he told me that he was being sent to Clearwater, Florida and for me to wait until I heard from him. Wait, that was all I was doing anyway. I didn't leave the phone, and after six days he called from Clearwater, Florida. He was to have his basic training there.

I'd never heard of Clearwater, Florida.But I soon made plans to go for a visit. I went by train, and one to get off at Clearwater, Florida. It was a very small station with no one to meet me. Soon, I saw a soldier walking toward the station and as he came closer, I

Collecting scrap paper during World War II - l to r: Marie Gerardy, Dorothy Ray, Mrs. Malcolm Shap, Louise West, Lucille Gholston, Thelma Harkrider, Mel Punessen, Helen Underwood, Methodist Preacher's Wife, and Catherine Duckworth.

realized it was J.R.

I could not believe my eyes, he was so sunburned, his hair was cut so short, he was so thin, and he was in his uniform from the United States of America. He was a changed man, but still he was the most handsome man in the world, and I loved him with all my heart. While I was there, I could spend one hour with him each night, that is if things went well and he got a pass. We would try to work out a way for us to exist. Our lives were in shock. We had been married five years, he was 27 years old and I was 26. We had just bought a home and how could I carry on without him? That big question along with many others kept my head spinning.

Soon the two weeks of basic training was over and I saw him get on a troop train and leave me standing alone, crying my heart out. I came home, it was school time, so I got ready for another year. That year, first grade boys and girls, had never meant so much to me. Every morning I looked forward to seeing them. I could feel their love, it made my day.

J.R. was sent to Enid, Oklahoma and soon I had a letter. One day in October, I came home from school to find him there. He had his first furlough. Mr. Martin, the superintendent at school, gave me a week off to be with him. No time in my life had I known so much love, friendship, and kindness

from friends. I shall never forget the many kind and understanding people that helped me get through the days. Seems like now, we were all in the war and were willing to help in some way. We were all one big support group.

He returned to the air base in Enid to continue his training. His letters came everyday, keeping busy all the time. One day, a week before Christmas, a letter came and later a call came, asking me if I could come to Enid to visit. He would leave Enid soon, destination unknown. I had many parents of children in my room helping me carry on. One parent especially volunteered to teach for me. So Louise Bingham took my room of 1st graders and went ahead doing all my duties and even more, letting me go for a visit. I had my visit with him and again I saw him leave on a troop train for some unknown destination.

I came home. Christmas was near, but heart was not merry and I did not want to celebrate. During the holidays I got a letter, and he was in Pendleton Oregon. That was far away, but I was thankful he was still in the States. The thought of going overseas always took my breath away.

People were becoming very anxious to help with the war effort. Plans were made for every person to be involved. Soon the school decided to teach six days a week so the

month of May could be free for children and adults to help with the farm and food raising. This was great, I enjoyed my day at school.

Along with this came the ration books. One for sugar and for gas, even automobile tires were rationed. The ration books of stamps became very important. It was essential.

School was dismissed the 1st of May and I was looking forward to get to visit J.R. once again. At last a call came and he said for me to come to Oregon. The trains were very crowded by now, no pullman, just chair-cars. But people were glad to even get to go that way. I left Longview early one Saturday morning and arrived in Pendleton on Tuesday. I sat up all the way. But I was not complaining. I just was glad to do it. People were kind and helpful and thoughtful to one another, always eager to help others and even mothers with their children or we were eager to give our seat to someone in need.

J.R. was in Oregon only two days after I arrived. Once again I saw him leave on the troop train, but this time he told me he was going to Sioux City, Iowa and that I could follow him. He was to be in Sioux City several months. I found an apartment when I arrived there. He could leave the base every night, so this was wonderful. In July he was given a furlough to visit his

family. He knew when he left this base, in Sioux City, that he would go to the point of embarkation to go overseas.

His brother George Edward, known as ``Buddy'', was the pilot of a B-17 and had finished his training and was ready to go overseas. He also came home for a visit and it was great for them to get to be together. This was their last time because Buddy was shot down and killed on February 2, 1944. When we got back to the base things were stirring, all was ready to move out. This time it was final, they were going to the point of embarkation. Once again, August, 1943, he left me, and I returned home to teach.

I could never explain how those first graders helped me through these days. I thank God every day for their love, kindness, and understanding. For 32 days I did not receive a letter from him. When I was home I lived by the radio. Walter Winchel was a news reporter, and I liked him best of all. He always had a word of hope and encouragement for us, and we all needed that. When J.R. left the States I rented our house, sold our car, and got a room with a friend, Sybil Duran. She was also a teacher. She was great. She made me feel like a part of the family and I needed that support. I walked to school, rode the bus on weekends to visit my parents.

All people were willing to help the

war effort. We had a group of war wives that helped support one another, and help the war effort in every way possible. We collected newspapers, we gave blood, we learned to knit, we bought war bonds, we collected items to send to the men overseas. Many things could not be bought. Just once in awhile could we buy items such as gum and cigars. I knitted J.R. a scarf and then a sweater. They didn't fit but it was special anyway. I was known for collecting cigars. Dennis Stovall was the druggist here, and he'd save some for me until by and by I had enough to mail. All people were patriotic. War bond rallies were attended regularly. Children saved pennies. Red, white, and blue stars were displayed on my front door to show how many men we had in the service and had their names on the stars. Friends wrote to all they knew. I even wrote to some I didn't know, I just knew their families.

I sent a lot of packages. The post office accused me of sending two many. My mother made angel food cakes, and that was J.R.'s favorite. We saved our sugar to make cookies and candies and we used the white syrup for ourselves. I sent games, pictures, news items, or anything I could mail. I kept busy teaching, I did church activities, and I kept the mail going everyday. During this time everyone lived

J.R. and Helen Underwood.

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for the mail. J.R. wrote to me also. He sent beautiful cards on every occasion, and if he could not buy one he'd make one and send it ``V-mail''.

J.R. landed in North Africa, his group serviced fighter planes, P - 38's. As the war progressed he moved up closer to the front. Next he went to Sicily, then to Sardinia, then at last to Italy. It was in the Southern part of Italy. He had several rest furloughs. This gave him an opportunity to go to many places.

He sent me many lovely gifts, which I still have and treasure. He had a small photograph of me which he carried in his wallet. From this he had an oil painting made in Italy, this was very special. He sent one China picture from Italy, a jewelry box made of olive wood from Rome, two China hand painted pictures, a bracelet and a cameo from the Isle of Capri. An ivory bracelet from Egypt, white lace and linen handkerchiefs from Switzerland, and white and brown kid gloves from Naples, Italy. I kept scrap books, six big ones. They include news, pictures, letters,''v - mail,'' and even newspapers they had overseas.

Our school was small, only Q.M. Martin, Superintendent; Principal Grady LaGrone; one school secretary, Catherine Durran; and 25 teachers. The school faculty presented plays too benefit the Red Cross. The first

one given was ``Feudin' in the Hills.'' Admission was 18 cents for adults and 9 cents for children. The white and black teachers, and pupils, were asked to give to the Red Cross. Teachers were asked to give one to five dollars, and students 10 cents. The goal was $150 and that was not promptly.

The village players were very active at this time. They presented programs to the returned sick and wounded soldiers. We presented programs in Tyler, Longview, and Shreveport. This was very important, and it was a great part of my life at that time. Early in 1944, Mr. Martin enlisted and Grady LaGrone was Superintendent while he was away.

J.R. was away three Christmases. We didn't have much celebration as we know it now. We didn't have a tree, we didn't decorate. There were no big events. Just day to day worship and thankful hearts, helping one another through times of sorrow and it came to so many. It came to our family also on February 22, 1944. J.R.'s brother, George Edward, was lost. He was a pilot as I've said before. He did not get to finish his missions. On May of 1990, J.R. and myself, had the opportunity to visit England where he was stationed, and France and Italy also. This was an important trip. We relived all the places of importance then, and to think of the great sacrifice

that was made by so many.

On August 15, 1945, peace came, and soon a letter from J.R. saying for me to resign and get our house in order for he would come home. On November 27, 1945, a Western Union came saying, ``I arrived safely, don't attempt to contact me.'' I waited, and on November 28 another wire, ``We'll see you Saturday at Tyler, stay at the hotel.'' I was there waiting when his call came from Camp Fanning. At last the long wait was over, and once again we were happy. He was discharged on December 13, 1945. That was the first day of the rest of our lives.

Walter Maurilzen

We found Walter Mauritzen to have been the most well traveled of those we have interviewed relating to World War II. He served with the Army Air Corps and the 33rd Fighter Group in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, China , and India during almost three years overseas. He kept a diary during this service which he shared, but he has a fine memory which made the diary just a means of confirmation. His constant companion and friend during this time was a Bible given to him by his grandfather. This Bible is still a valued treasure, as well traveled as its owner.

I was born on February 8, 1922 in Clayton, Texas at my home.I had four sisters and one brother

There's 24 years difference between Ted, the youngest,and me the oldest. I went to school through the eighth grade at Clayton. We had country schools then. Then I went to school through the eleventh grade at Carthage High School and graduated in 1940. I then went to farming. I lived on a farm and helped my dad make a crop. I then spent all December, 1940 pulling or cross out saw and an axe.

I then joined the Army Air Corps on January 4, 1941. I went to Kelly Field in San Antonio for Basic Training. I thought that was a snap after pulling that saw. I was then assigned to the then called 33rd Pursuit Group (later Fighter Group) which had just been formed on January 15, 1941. I was among the first troops assigned to the 33rd. I was assigned to the 59th Pursuit Squadron (later Fighter Squadron), New York. I went right to work ``on the line.'' That is , servicing the planes, and I learned while I was on - the - job. The first time I looked in the cockpit of a P - 40B fighter; I though, ``Lord, how an I ever going to learn all these instruments.'' But I did. I had joined the Air Corps because I liked airplanes. I was a mechanic then was made a crew chief which meant I was in charge of taking care of a plane to keep it flying.

We stayed at Mitchell Field until December 8, the day

after Pearl Harbor. It had been good peacetime duty being just outside New York City. We had a Class A Pass which meant we could leave anytime we weren't on duty. I became an expert on New York and the subway system. We'd go to 99 Park Avenue, and get a free pass to any sports event there was, or to theaters and shows on Broadway. I spent one full night riding the subway but wouldn't dare do it now.

We went from Mitchell to the submarine base at Groton, Conn. We stayed at an old dairy barn and about froze to death. We stayed there two or three days and because of the cold had to heat the planes' engines on every 30 or 40 minutes. If you touched the metal on the plane with your bare hand the skin stuck. We went back to Mitchell then on to the Martin Aircraft plant near Baltimore. We stayed there until the scare of the Japanese invasion of the Aleutians in the spring of 1942. Then our squadron fighters and a plane with the crew chiefs and others left for that direction. On the way we stopped at Barksdale. We spent two nights there because of trouble with the plane. The first night I called Dr. Davis who had the only phone in Clayton. I asked him to tell Mother and Daddy to meet me at eleven that evening. He misunderstood and told

them I was leaving at eleven so they almost burned up the motor on the truck getting there before I left. I met them about midnight. They bought a bucket of fresh blackberries but I didn't want them for fear of being thought of as too ``country.'' Come to find out my friends in the squadron would have been tickled to death to have them.

We then flew as far as Paine Field in Everett, Washington. We stayed there about a month. Then we took a troop train all across the country to Philadelphia. Then we left October 23, 1942 as part of a convoy of ships headed for the invasion carried on the carrier ``Chemango'' and were catapulted off to land in North Africa at the time of the invasion. I really got sea sick on that transport.

We landed in North Africa on November 8, 1942 at Medina near Port Lysutey. That's just above Casablanca. I was made the machine gunner on a landing barge even though I'd never fired one before. The battleship ``Texas'' shelled the airport and the runway and we lost 17 out of 25 planes from crashes due to muddy ground. The planes had to land there because they didn't have the training to land back on the carrier. We also lost one pilot and plane when taking off from the carrier.

When we landed I

got roped into joining an attack on a fort held by the French. After that we went on to Casablanca until sometime in January. The attack on the fort was on November 9. I wasn't an infantryman but they just needed some more men. I was a staff sergeant but didn't know what to do I was like a raw recruit. Somehow I was the third man through the front gate. The first two were killed and I turned around and ran. I fell flat on my face and looked back. I had tripped over a dead American captain. I got away from that front door and went around to the side where there was a graveyard. It had a low fence around it. Someone tried to throw a hand grenade over the fort wall but didn't heat it over and it came back toward us. We hit t ground in a hurry. Then I got a grenade and threw it over the wall. I'd been a southpaw pitcher. I got it over the wall and the machine gun nest which had been covering the front door stopped firing. I don't know if I got it or not because I couldn't see over the wall. Then the French started to give up. They were in holes everywhere in the fort set in a cliff. I had a Thompson sub-machine hun. I had it on full automatic when I met a full colonel who came in the front. He said, ``Sergeant, is there any way to get out of this place through the back?'' I said, `` Yes sir.'' So he said ,''Let's

go back and see.'' As we were walking someone took a shot at us. He shot once and I had a clip with 20 rounds and fired them all. I don`t know if we hit anything , but we weren't fired on anymore. That's the only time I got in actual combat. Once was enough.

I went back that day to my squadron at the Casablanca airport. We were there until January 1943. Then in six transport planes the so called ``Air Echelon'' of crew chiefs and extra pilots went up to the front with no planes. Our P-40's had been given to the French to use. We spent the night on Algiers then went on to Thelepthe, Tunisua. I believe we had three Spitfies for air cover. We flew on C-47 Transports. The ground there is flat and we were flying about 50 feet off the ground. That's because at the time the Germans controlled the air. We stayed low so we'd be hard to see if they were flying higher. Then we landed at Thelepthe people yelled, `` Get those planes unloaded and away from here.'' That's because it was only 20 miles from the front and vulnerable to German attack. They were raiding it three or four times a day. They'd come out of the sun early in the morning and strafe you. We were strafed or bombed on a daily basis.

On January 15, 1943 I was helping the French, there service some planes. They hadn't dug fox-

holes in their area. We looked up to see the Germans strafing the field. We turned and started running to get away from the plane being worked on. We ran and got 100 feet away to an empty 55 gallon drum. We tried to hide behind it to keep it between us and the Germans. The airfield was four miles square. The foxholes where we slept were some distance from the line (the flying field). But wherever your plane was you dug you a hole. Then you kept your eyes to the sky all the time. Later that same day I had to go to the other side of the field. Some JU - 88's (German twin engine bombers) came over and I saw the bomb bay doors open in the bottom of the planes and the bombs dropped out. It looked like the bombs were coming right for me. I ran for the nearest foxhole which already held two or three men. The man on top yelled, ``Get on me, get on me.'' That's because if we got hit I'd be the one hit. The bombs landed about 200 feet from us. But we weren't hurt. Being bombed was bad but strafing was too because the Germans could surprise you.

We were relieved finally. We were sending out our own flights against the Germans. We got stronger as the campaign for North Africa progressed. But we lost a lot of planes and had pilot fatigue. So we were relieved just before the Germans made a big ground attack. The Germans overran

Thelepethe shortly thereafter and few of the people got out. But we had been pulled back.

In the 33rd Fighter Group there was the 58th, 59th, and 60th Fighter Squadrons. I was in the 59th. Our commander back at Mitchell Field had been Colonel Quesada. He went on to become a famous four star general. Our commander at Thelepthe was Colonel Momyer. He was later a lieutenant general.

Then we pushed the Germans back through the Kasserine Pass. We were supposed to go close to the front again close to the German lines. We moved several times and even got flooded out at one place. It was cold and windy there. We dug foxholes for everything and dug enough for a ditch to go from Casablanca to Tunis.

We got two meals a day, breakfast and supper. We were on English rations. Arabs would come around selling fresh eggs. I bought an Arab stove which operated on 100 octane gasoline. We'd make omelets. At night you never took off your clothes. You'd put on more. But try sleeping in a four foot long hole with the dirt coming on you. You would be afraid to leave that hole even to relieve yourself for fear of being shot in the dark. There was no light shown at night.

The Germans finally surrendered in North Africa in the spring of 1943.

We were with the first Americans to go up on Cape Bon after the surrender. There were several hundred thousand who gave up, Germans and Italians. The Italian especially, while passing us on the way to a prisoner camp, would yell at us -- You're going to the front to get shot but were going to New York.'' And they did end up here in permanent camps. We got up to Cape Bon and came upon all the equipment they'd left behind. I had a motorcycle with a sidecar end a 1937 Ford (German model) truck. We didn't walk anywhere. We took over a German airbase and shortly thereafter a German plane landed by mistake. They had five gallon cans of fresh apricots packed in ice meant for the German high command. We got the apricots. Some of the boys went to eating German rations, but I wouldn't touch it. Then one of the men came who could read German and said it was horse meat. That ended that. The German bread was so hard you had to soak it in boiling water before you could eat it.

We got one canteen of water every 24 hours for awhile. I didn't drink coffee before. But with so little water you didn't waste any. It was a most valuable treasure. So I learned to drink coffee black and hot. That's the way I still drink it today. While we were in Africa there were after dog

fights over our bases between ours and enemy planes. There were lots of them. We could see from the ground the smoke from their guns. You could tell when they were firing. I saw them shot down right over the field. As a matter of fact, I watched one Frenchman got shot down. With my field glasses I could see him slump down then he'd come to and pull his plane up again. Then he passed out and the plane crashed. Then a pilot shot a German plane down which crashed right on the field. We always had two plane patrols over the field to be ready for an attack.

We had trouble getting parts to fix our planes. When a plane crashed we'd role the parts. The sheet metal men used tin cans and whatever to fix the planes. We had no control tower. Planes coming back in sand storms or at night were often lucky to land safely. We'd turn on the landing lights of the planes on the ground to show them where to come in sometimes. One night a pilot and I were on his plane for that reason. One plane came in too low and we thought he'd hit our plane. He reacted at the last moment and pulled up, but left a tire mark on the canopy of our plane on the ground. We had jumped off the plane already. I never got a scratch but saw others die close by. I was strapping a pilot in a plane one day when the Germans attacked. As the crew chief I was

Gladys Nicholson and Tim Gillman and Anthony Stallone of Loblolly.

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base at Licata for the campaign. Then we went clear across Sicily to Messina and got to see the ancient civilization remains.

We then participated in the invasion at Salerno, Italy. We were supposed to go in at Paestum but went in at Salerno. Our unit received five battle stars in Africa and two arrow heads (for invasions). I went in at D+2 at Salerno (two days after the first landing). At Salerno we stayed under shell fire for 36 hours. You soon learned when those rascals were going to get close to you. We had to unload an LST by ourselves. It had big doors which penned in front and a ramp came down. We had to unload our supplies by hand while the Germans were shelling us.

Then we left to get to Paestum and went between the German and British lines to get there. I asked one of the English where the front was, and he replied, ``You are on the front.'' We went down to where a bridge was but were delayed to let tanks cross. I found out there had been a big tank battle there. We got to Paestum to support our P-40's. We were so close to the front a plane could leave and return from a bomb run in 15 minutes. We could lay out at night and watch our battleships shelling German positions up in the hills. That was a pretty sights as those shells glowed as they passed over us.

From Paestum we went to right outside Naples, Italy. That was at the foot of Mount Vesuvius. We could see the lava flows at night. Then we provided our cover for the invasion at Anzio.

Then President Roosevelt asked for a fighter group to volunteer to go to China. And our colonel volunteered us to go. We were needed to protect B - 29 bases there. So we went from Italy to Egypt to India and to China (near Chengtu). And when we got to China we stepped back 1,000 years in time. But to get there we had taken a troop train from Bombay, India to Calcutta. I didn't see him then but by comparing dates and places - K. Troy Harkrider and I figured out later he had been guarding the train at Calcutta that day.

We then went on to Kanchrapara, India. In India the gauge of the rails change, and when you come to that you have to change trains. And with us that meant unloading and loading supplies when we changed trains. Then we flew over the Himalayan Mountains into China. We were flying at about 19,500 feet and were about 50 feet off the ground.

We still had our P - 40's when we went to China. The six airbases grounded Chengtu had all been built by hand by the Chinese. We got there in June, 1944 and came back to India in October, 1944. That's when we got more modern P - 47 fighters. Then

we got P - 38 fighters. The P - 38 was hard to work on but easy to taxi on the field. The easiest one to work on was the P - 47. They called that ``the Jug.''

I was a crew chief with one plane and a pilot. The first pilot I had was Lieutenant Reddin in North Africa. He was from Mississippi. Then I had a pilot from Texas. They were good pilots. One pilot in our 59th Squadron became an ace (shot down five enemy planes) in one day. That was January 15, 1943 at Thelepthe when we got the Unit Citation. That was Captain Boone who was later killed in action. We lost a lot of pilots. Of course, they only flew a certain number of missions and then got to come home.

I was among the last group of men from the 59th Squadron to come home. I was in India from October, 1944 to the summer of 1945. When the war ended I was on a ship in the Mediterranean on my way home after almost three years overseas. We went on to New York and went to Camp Kilmer, and then to San Antonio and my discharge was on September 11, 1945.

I came back to Carthage and started helping Daddy pull corn. One day my mother said she needed two or three stamps and I went to the post office and Douglas Belden from Clayton was working there. He said, ``We need some help in here. Why don't you see Mrs. Brannon?'' Mrs.

Emma Brannon was the Carthage postmaster. I saw her but she said she didn't need any help then. But a few days later I got a post card form her saying she wanted me to go to work that day. So I started working for the Post Office on October 4, 1945. I was promoted to Assistant Postmaster in 1956. I stayed and retired February 12, 1977.

I got married December 15, 1945 to Jeanne Alice Stewart from Marshall. We had three boys: Mike, Chris, and David.

Now to go back to the Chinese before I forget. They were 1,000 years behind times. There were just mobs of people everywhere. Two friends and I went one day back in the hills to a town. They had never seen an American before. They turned out school. We walked through a gate to enter the town. There was an arch to walk through. We walked by the school to get to town. They let school out to see us. There must have been 500-700 kids. They followed us all over town.

We always traveled by weapons carrier to get around. We drove fast but crowds would just move out of the way. One day in Chengtu I was sitting on the vehicle while a friend was driving. I thought he was going straight but he made a left turn. I flew off going straight and knocked over a number of Chinese. Another day I was sitting in a weapons carrier parked in Chengtu when

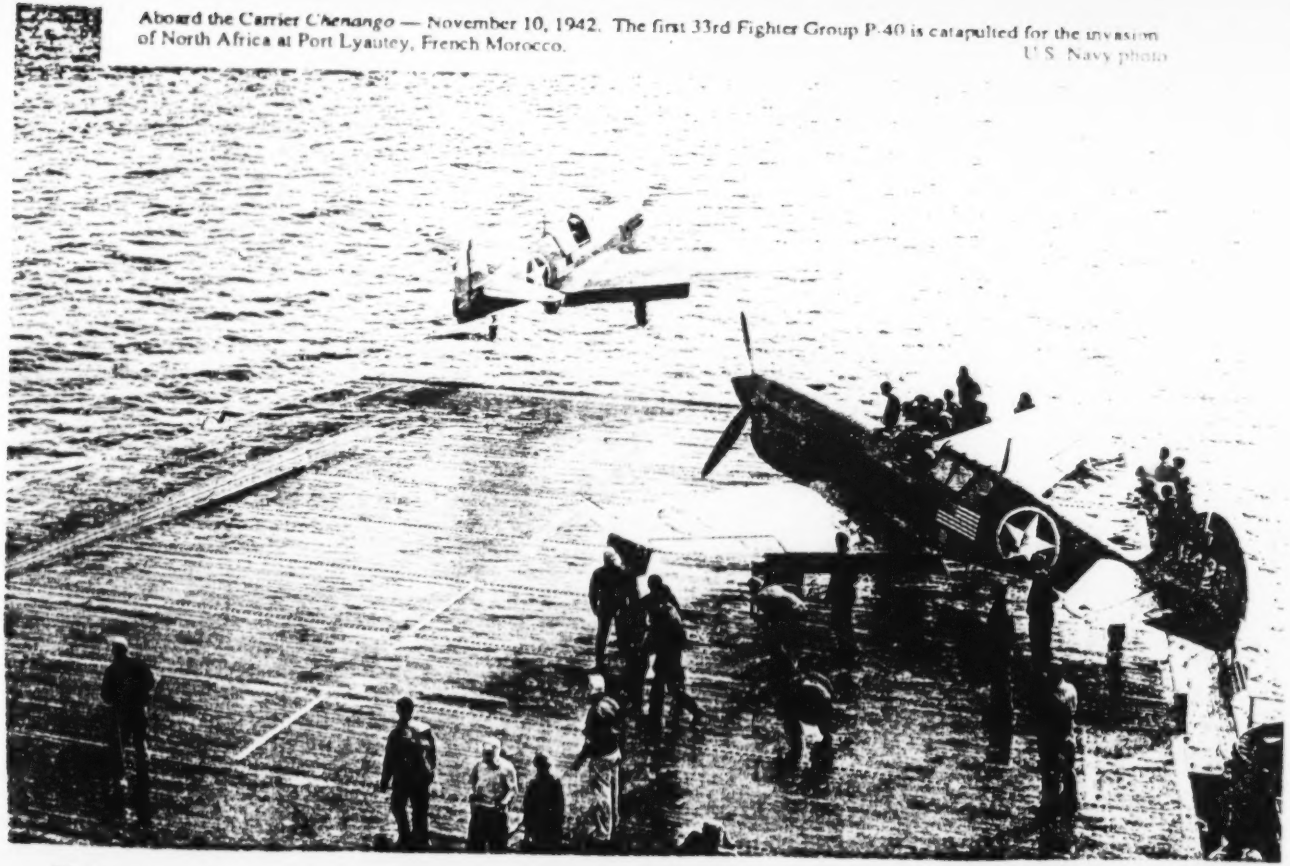
the police came by. They were leading a man and a lot of people were following just laughing and carrying on. They went around a building close by and I heard a ``Boom - Boom.'' I found out he'd stolen something from another weapons carrier and when they caught him they shot him. The day we left China, the mayor and a councilman got caught stealing and were shot in our hotel (where we lived). Life was cheap there! It was the cheapest commodity in China.

Thelepthe, Tunisia; Jan. 1943. Four crew chiefs sweat out a mission. Walter Mauritzen is 2nd from right.

Walter Mauritzen in 1991.

Walter Mauritzen 4th from left- Thelepthe, Tunisia; Jan, 1947.

Assam, India - 1944 or 1945. Walter Mauritzen - standing at left.



Aboard the Carrier *Chenango* — November 10, 1942. The first 33rd Fighter Group P-40 is catapulted for the invasion of North Africa at Port Lyautey, French Morocco.

U.S. Navy photo

Walter Maurtizen - Staff Sergeant during World War II.

Nagahuli, India - 1945: P - 38 and Crew Chief Walter Mauritzen.

C.E. Marshall

C.E. Marshall is a native of Panola County who went off to war in 1943. He served in the south Pacific flying against the Japanese as the pilot of a B-24 bomber. Now he is enjoying his retirement time back home in East Texas.

Q: Mr. Marshall, where were you born?

A: I was born here in Carthage, just about half a mile from where I live now.

Q: Could you tell us when?

A: July 4, 1918.

Q: Was your family from here?

A: Yes, both my parents were native of the area.

Q: Could you tell us their names?

A: Carl D. Marshall and Emma Belamy Marshall.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: I went to school at the Union School which was in the Snap Community up to the 8th grade. And then I graduated in Carthage.

Q: What kind of activities did your family do?

The Crew - Front row L to R - Cecil E. Marshall, 1st Lt., Pilot, Carthage, Texas. Libero T. DeAmicis, 2nd Lt., Bombadier, Evansville, Ind. Bertram D. Beltz, 2nd Lt., Co-pilot, Shawno, Wis. Thomas W. Goddard, 2nd Lt., Navigator, Blunt, S. Dak.
Back row - L to R - William H. Austin, T-Sgt, Engineer, Milford, Del. Henry C. Gerry, T-Sgt, Ballgunner (asst. Engr.), Woburn, Mass. Sheridan T. Haines, T-Sgt, Nose Gunner (asst. Radio Op.), Montgomery, Penn. Paul P. Kosowski, S-Sgt, Tail Gunner, Detroit, Mich. Harold J. Baker, T-Sgt, Radio Op, Windsor, Ill. Delbert H. Kitzman, S-Sgt, Upper Gunner, Lomuta, Calif.

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A: My father was a farmer, and my mother was a housewife.

Q: Do you remember the attack on Pearl Harbor?

A: Very well, it was on a Sunday morning. We were at church when we heard about it, up at Cedar Grove Baptist.

Q: When did you go into the military?

A: I went into the military on November of 1942, and was called into active duty in the last of January, 1943. I volunteered for aviation cadet training, and was sworn in and put on stand-by until active duty.

Q: Where were you stationed at?

A: It was at Shephered Field at Wichita Falls, Texas. That was the Army Air Corps base. I went through basic training there. I left there and went to Austin College at Sherman for a refresher course, then went to San Antonio for classification and pre-flight training. From San Antonio I went to Fredrick, Oklahoma for advance training. That's where I graduated from flying school. I got my wings as a pilot, and my commission as a 2nd lieutenant. From there I went to Liberal, Kansas and into B-24 transition training. That was for learning to fly the B-24 bomber. From there I went to Walla Walla Washington for phase training. That's where we got

the crew together. I never did stay in one place long.

Q: When did you go overseas and where did you serve?

A: I went overseas with a new B-24 in October of 1944. I served in the 13th Air Force in the Southwest Pacific. We were flying off of Mortai, the island of Morotai. We were with the 13th Air Force, 307th Bomb Group, 427th Bomb Squadron. The ``Long Rangers'' were what they called us.

Q Could you tell us about some of your experiences?

A: Our Group was known as the ``Long Rangers'' because of the distance we flew. Our missions were from 12 to 15 hours long. That's from take-off time to return destination. We were having to carry one to two bomb bay tanks in a single trip. We were principally bombing in the Philippines. I think the longest mission was half over. Then we had to sweat out whether we had enough gas to get back. There were not other places to land.

Q: How many missions did you go on?

A: I flew fifty-two missions.

Q: Did you receive any decorations or medals?

A: I got the Purple Heart, the Air Medal with two clusters, and the Philippine Liberation Medal. I received about three

"Dinah Might II" - one of B-24's flown by C.E. Marshall's crew.

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or four.

Q: When did you get back to the U.S.?

A: I got back in June, 1945. It was June 28 when I returned to San Antonio. I was discharged July 4, 1945, which was my birthday.

Q: What kind of job did you get when you returned?

A: I worked for Chicago Corporation, which was here. I worked there for a short time, then I worked for a gas company in Victoria Texas. I returned from there after thirty years. It was 1980 when I retired.

Q: How has life been since then?

A: Good, I've enjoyed retirement fully. Whenever I got out, I got busy and built this house. I built about 95% of it myself.

A: Can you describe the devastation you saw there in the war?

A: I could not conceive of the devastation at Manila, the capital of the Philippines. I was on, I believe, the first mission that was flown to Manila to bomb Japanese airfields outside the city. The first time I was there, it was a beautiful city. Three or four days later, I went on another mission. There were smoke fires here and there. Some of the city was obscured. On the third raid you could see the devastation from

15 to 16 thousand feet which we were flying. That was the last time I went over it. Manila was totally destroyed by the Japanese. Large modern buildings were crumpled from the bombing. It was similar to what has happened to Iraq.

Q: Can you describe the tents you lived in?

A: Our tents were sixteen by sixteen. It was up to us to get the material for our living quarters. We built a platform out of mahogany and teak wood. It was rough. The tent was made out of a parachute. That blocked out a lot of the heat. There were four of us in each tent. We planted palm trees down the sides of it. We lived at a coconut plantation. There were about 30,000 Japanese that lived on the island. They were cut off and had nothing to eat. We had control of the island, Morotai. But the one next to us was held by the Japanese the entire time. Periodically they were close enough with anti-aircraft artillery, but they didn't bother us.

Q: Did all of your crew make it back?

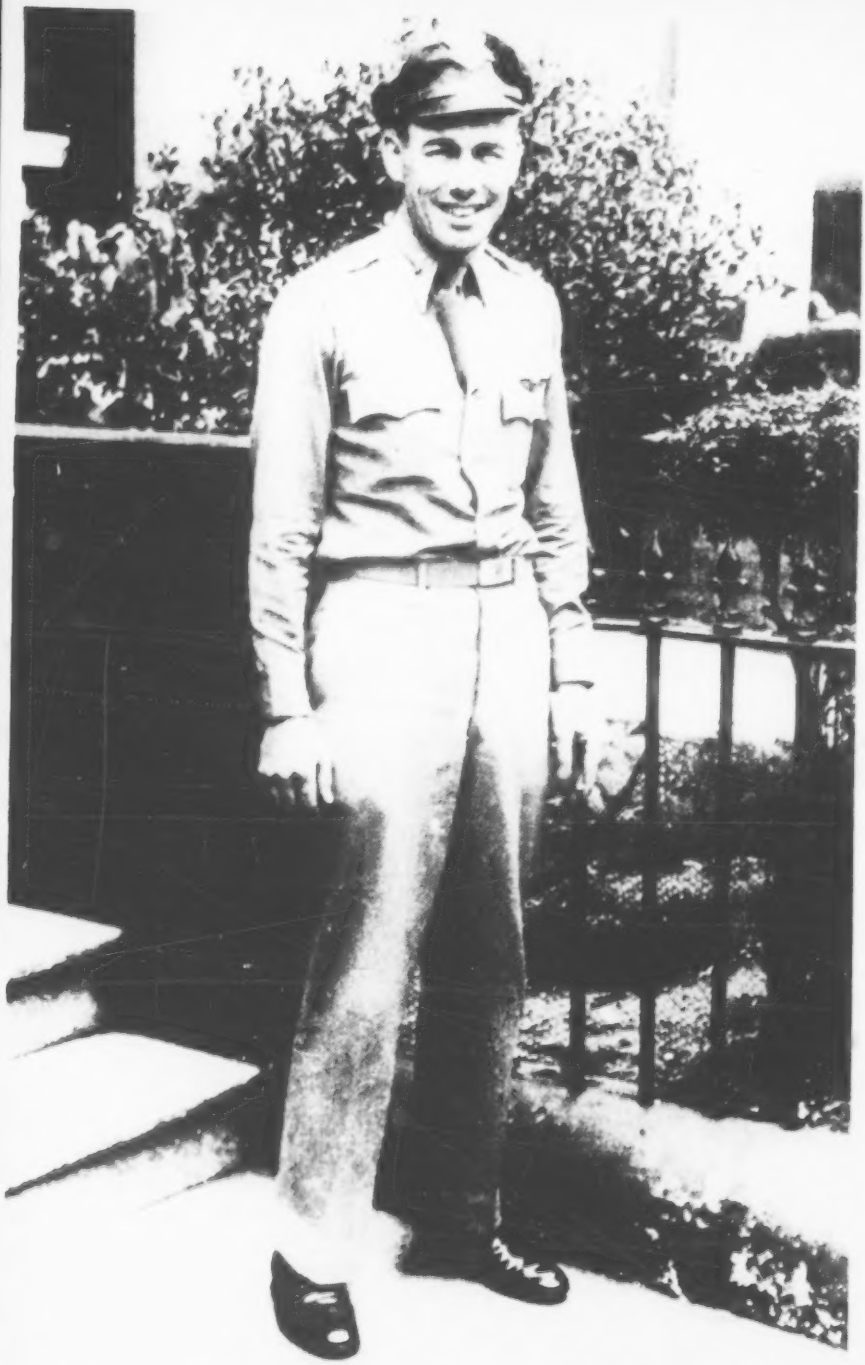
A: Well; we all made it back o.k. except for our navigator. He didn't get to finish his complete tour of missions. We got caught in a string of Japanese bombs just before take-off one morning. The navigator was hurt and evacuated back to the

Lt. DeAmicis and Lt. Beltz with "Long-Rangers" flight jacket.

U.S.

Q: Have you seen any of your crew since the war?

A: I saw the navigator and the bombardier. I saw the bombardier in 1953. I saw him in San Antonio as I was living in Victoria at the time. I saw the navigator six or seven years ago in Denver when I was visiting up there. I've seen him a couple of times now.



C.E. Marshall in Sydney, Australia-
February, 1945. 62

Bill Gullette

W.H. Bill'' Gullette is now enjoying his retirement after a busy career, much of it at Panola College as the Dean of Occupational Education. But at an earlier time he went off to war in 1943. Mr. Gullette served as a bombardier on a B-17 flying against Hitler's Germany. And he finished the war as a Prisoner of War before returning home and a chance to resume a more normal life.

I was born in Van Buren, Arkansas in 1923. I was the third of four children. I had an older brother and an older sister, and then a younger sister. My older sister served in the WAGS (Women's Army Corps) in World War II, and my older brother served in the infantry and was killed in 1944.

I attended Van Buren High School and graduated from there. Then in 1940 I went to the University of Arkansas, and I enrolled in the college of agriculture. I also enrolled in the Army R.O.T.C. program at college.

I was enrolled in college when the attack on Pearl Harbor took place. I remember very viv-

2nd Lt. W.H. "Bill" Gullette-1944

idly, of course, December 7, 1941. The word came over the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. And I suppose like most Americans, I was surprised because in those days we were not aware of the events going on around us. We knew of course there were some problems going on that involved Japan. A lot of discussion went on about some of the things in terms of trade with Japan. Yes, it was very much of a surprise.

I left the University of Arkansas shortly after pearl Harbor. I applied for a civilian flight training program, but was turned down because of a physical ailment. They said it would prevent me from ever flying. While I was at the university I had been working for the Greyhound Bus Company. Then I transferred to Fort Smith, Arkansas, and was working there until I went into the Service in February, 1943.

I went into the Army Air Corps primarily because I thought it was a good way to spend the winter in Miami Beach, Florida. I say that because when I went to Camp Roberson, Arkansas (an induction center), the person who handled my assignment was a person I had known at the university. He explained to me that all the basic trainees from the Air Corps would be going to Miami Beach, Florida and living in nice plush hotels.

I thought that would be a good way to spend February since it was sleeting and snowing in Arkansas. And so I decided to go into the Air Corps. The only problem was when we got to Florida was we were living in the plush hotels, but they had stripped them bare. And if you lived lower than six floors up you didn't get to use the elevators. So we had to struggle all the way to the lobby. The only hot water we had were the solar tanks on the roof. It was not a lovely picnic, but I guess at that time nothing was. That's why I really went into the Air Corps.

From there I was reassigned to fly in the aviation cadet program. While I was there I took another physical, and they told me that indeed I could fly. So I applied for the cadet program. Then I went to the University of Pittsburgh because they said you had to have some more college to be a cadet. From there I went right on into classification and was assigned to bombardier school. So that was my training. This school was in California. It was a combination of bombardier and navigator training. I finished the training and received my commission as a second lieutenant in 1944.

I was then assigned to B-17 bombers. I was with a crew that first went

B-17 and Bill Gullette's crew-1944 at Ardmore, Oklahoma. Back row-L to R-Frank Nowskowski, tail gunner; Shepherd, waist gunner; Jim Hedgecock, ball turret gunner; Woodrow Billingsley, flight engineer; William Landers, radio operator; Salvador Masterantonia, waist gunner; Front Row-L to R-Francisco , navigator; Bill Gullette, bombadier; Joe Frechette, pilot; and Norman Hansen, co-pilot.

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to Nebraska and then to Ardmore, Oklahoma for training as a crew. There were ten of us in the crew; pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, radio operation, two waist gunners, the ball turret, and the tail gunner. We went through several months of training together before we were scheduled to go overseas.

We went overseas in the last of August, 1944. We finished training in Oklahoma and went on leave. We went then to Lincoln, Nebraska where we picked up a brand new B-17 (a Flying Fortress) to fly overseas. Then we flew overseas to England and were assigned to the Eighth Air Force, the 437th Bomb Group, the 751st Squadron. This was a group of B-17's. We were stationed about 90 miles north of London at a town called Petersborough. The air base was there. Air bases were all over England at that time.

We underwent a period of transition training there, and then got six missions. The first mission was to support troops on the front line. We were luckier than another crew we had trained with for they were shot down on their first mission. The first three missions we flew were basically front line support. We were dropping very heavy duty bombs on German positions along the front lines.

At the time it was after D-Day (June, 1944) and the Allies had pretty well pushed through France. They were about in Germany. We had not encountered very many German fighters. The Luftwaffe (German air force) had been hammered down pretty good. Some of the greatest trouble we had was with the weather in England. The air fields were close together and we often took off in very heavy fog.

The German ant-aircraft fire was our main problem in combat. It was called flak. The other missions we flew we were hitting industrial plants such as refineries, synthetic rubber manufacturing plants, motor bearing factories. These were in the Leipgig and Mersberg, Germany areas. There was a concentration of this type of activity. On our sixth mission we were flying into the Luppig area when we were shot down. We encountered extremely heavy flak that day from anti-aircraft batteries. We found out that 58 B-17's were lost that day.

Our group that day was the first one to fly over the target. We went down and I became a P.O.W.(prisoner of war). I was fortunate for the camp I ended up in was run by the German Airforce. There were about 10,000 air force officers in that camp. Once we got to the camp we were not subjected to any physical abuse. We

were hit over the target and lost two engines. The B47 was a four engine plane. We were about to keep flying for about another hour and forty-five minutes on the other two engines. The plane was pretty badly shot-up although nobody in the plane had been hit at that time. We lost a third engine ant the last one started to go so we had to bail out. Everyone left the plane but we lost one of the gunners when his parachute didn't open. The rest of us got out safely. Five of us were captured immediately. We were not together because when you bail out of a plane you are some what scattered. I was caught within a inute or so after I hit the ground. I landed in a field and lost my flying boots. We always had another pair of shoes on us and I was trying to get them on me. Immediately, from a hedge row came a squad of German soldiers. I landed about 20 yards from a German farm.

I was then taken to a small village and within a hour or so after I got there three others in the crew joined me. The had us locked in a barn. The captured all of us, the nine survivors. We stayed there I guess for two or three days. The interrogated us some. Then by walking, and by truck, they took us to an interrogation center in Frankfurt. There we were put in solitary confinement. Our introduction to

Top-L to R-Frechette, Hansen,
Gullette, Fransico, Billingsley.
Bottom-L to R-Hedgecock, Nowskowski,
Shepherd, Masterantonia, Landers.

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prison started there. We received black bread twice a day. We were not abused, at least I wasn't, at the interrogation center. They asked a lot of questions but there was not much I could tell them anyway. We were shot down on Thanksgiving day and only had been with the group for two months. The Germans knew as much about the group as we did.

From there we were moved a variety of ways to a transit type camp, a ``dulag''. It was an intermediate camp. We had some interesting experiences on the trip. We went through an air raid ourselves. They took us into an air raid shelter. They walked us quite always on the ground through some mad German citizens. They weren't happy . We were on a train that had been in a tunnel during the air raid.

At the transit camp we had the first contact with the Red Cross. They took information on us as P.O.W.'s. We received some good meals at the camp, like potato's and fish. We were there a few days and then were place on another train. Then we moved by trucks to our permanent camp. We ended-up at Stalag Luft. One which was up on the Baltic Sea at a little town named Barth. There we were about 10,000 officers there. When we left the interrogation center the unlisted men went one way and the officers another. The pilot, co-pilot and myself

were fortunate to ship-out at the same time. We ended-up together at the same camp.

Conditions there - if you don't mind being hungry, and you don't mind being cold - were not too bad. I lost 30 pounds while a P.O.W. The 10,000 were located in four compounds which were surrounded by barbed wire and towers with machine guns. There were 2,500 people in each of the four compounds. In a compound generally there would be about ten barracks. They were called blocks, and were up on piers, like stilts. That was so people couldn't tunnel underneath. That's what a block was like. There were bunks three high. Bedding was an old sack type thing of straw. We did have one blanket a piece. The Red Cross had given us some heavy overcoats. The heating was with one very small coal stove. We had a ration some days of coal. They gave us saw dust pressed together in a block to burn. That was our heat and we used it for cooking too.

From the Germans in terms of food, we got black bread which was heavy. It always smelled sour. They occasionally made a broth of some sort, with barley or turnips usually. Once in a while we'd see some cabbage or potatoes. We were supposed to get Red Cross packages, but we didn't get them often. They had spam,

fruit, powdered milk, a can of oleo, sometimes a few packages of cigarettes. When we did get them they were days of celebration. The Germans confiscated the salt and pepper from the packages. The salt, for it was rare, and the pepper for some prisoners used that to upset the guard dogs. You learned to do needed things such as cutting a hole in the barracks floor for dumping out dish water. Some people would tease the dogs by rattling things underneath the barracks and guards would crawl under too. Then they'd drop the pepper which drove the dogs crazy. And they might dump water on the guard too.

Cigarettes were useful. The guards liked them. If there was a mean guard a prisoner might slip some cigarettes into his pocket and then see he was turned in to an officer for having American cigarettes.

In May, 1945, the Russians moved in and liberated us. Of course that was an experience too. The Germans had moved out in the middle of the night. We were told to pack up and the Germans were going to march us out. There was a military command among the P.O.W.'s. There was a senior officer, an Air Force colonel. But at any rate our commander Colonel Zemke refused to do it. The Germans then just left. Then Americans were at the gates and in the guard

towers for two days. That was to keep other Americans from roaming around in a dangerous situation. Then the Russians came in. It was an unstable time and mass confusion.

We stayed in the camp. They drove in a herd of cattle. We had a butcher so had meat for about a week. At the same time we had gone into town, and in warehouse found Red Cross packages by the thousands. We stayed there almost two weeks before we flew out, and back to France. There were a number of repatriation camps set up there. They were named for cigarettes: Camp Lucky Strike, Camel, Chesterfield. These were tent cities. Then we were shipped back to the United States.

From Norfolk, Virginia, I came back on leave to Arkansas. I jumped the troop train which was going all over. When we got to Arkansas I got off. It was a great homecoming even though that's when I found out my brother had been killed. While a P.O.W. I had only received one letter. Then I was finally separated from the Service. I had received the Air Medal and also the European Campaign medal.

I went back to the University of Arkansas and graduated, and then was a county supervisor for the Farmer's Home Administration. In 1950 I went into sales, and 1951 I was married to Geneva

Nigell. We had a daughter, and two sons. We came to Carthage, and in 1964 I went to Panola Jr. College teaching Biology and math. Then in 1971 the college established a technical division and I became the first dean. I retired in 1988.

Becky, our oldest daughter, graduated from the University of Texas and teaches at the college here. Bill Jr. graduated from Texas A&M. He is married with two sons. He lives in Longview and is the quality manager of Vertex Corp. Benny, our youngest, graduated from Texas A&M too and is working with Motorola in design and development.

Ashley Wilkerson of Loblolly, and W.H. Gullette-1991.

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Louise's Celebration

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It all started with the beginning of World War II on December 7, 1941 (the bombing of Pearl Harbor), and it ended with George Berry's first furlough home before going overseas as a B-17 pilot. These are some of the things that happened over a period of one year.

George Berry West, age 22 and married five years, received his draft registration card signed by Mr. Sam Matthews (member of the draft board) on May 26, 1941. He was classified III-A by the local draft board.

George Berry volunteered as an Aviation Cadet and had to report to Barksdale Field, Louisiana, on April 7, 1942 at 8 a.m. for examination. He was then placed on 90 day furlough. He left Carthage on July 30, 1942. Louise Underwood and I drove George Berry and Buddy Underwood in our car and let them out at the gate. They stayed there in tents until August 2nd. They were put on troop trains and sent to the Army Air Corps Classification Center at Nashville, Tennessee. Here they

lived in barracks and were given more physical examinations and more mental exams along with shots, etc. They were classified as pilots and sent to Maxwell Field, Alabama for their preflight training. They left for Maxwell on Sunday, August 16th.

I received my first mail from George Berry (a penny post card) dated July 30, 1942. He was very prompt in writing at first, but later was a poor correspondent.

On Friday, September 18, Louise and I went by train to visit George Berry and Buddy for the first time. We were to stay at the Jefferson Davis Hotel, and the room cost $7.50 a night. The train fare from Shreveport to Montgomery was $24.00. The train was very hot and dirty. Mrs. Fite (Louise's mother) prepared us a box lunch with fried chicken and all the trimmings. We had no longer started on our train journey than I started getting train sick. Someone suggested I turn around and maybe that would help, and sure enough it did. We ate our lunch then. The black soot from the train was all over us by the time we arrived in Montgomery, but we didn't care. We were so excited. We'd left on Friday and we had to come back to Carthage on Monday. They had a dance on Saturday night for all the cadets, and George Berry and I went.

They were sent by troop train on Tuesday, October 20th,

to Emery Riddle Field in Union City, Tennessee to Primary Training School where they began to fly.

I flew from Shreveport, Louisiana to Memphis, Tennessee on October 30, 1942 to visit George Berry. I had to catch a bus from Memphis to Union City and was nauseated all the time I was gone. I spent the night in Shreveport with Mrs. Pickle (she was the mother of Howell and T.G. Duckworth and her husband was a medical doctor). She almost made me late catching the plane. I vomited all the way on my first plane trip. I had always been car sick and now found out I was also train and air sick too.

I made lots of friends in the Service. Shirley Wilson (Mrs. Fred Wilson) who lives in Shreveport now was about the closest one that has lasted through the years.

Louise and I left Carthage on December 10 and stayed until December 28th. I worked two days at a five and dime store, total salary $1.25 a day. We walked 14 blocks to work and I had to soak my feet in hot water. ``I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas'' by Bing Crosby had just come out, and we did have a white Christmas. George Berry and Buddy were sent to Basic Flying School in Greenville, Mississippi on December 28, 1942.

George Berry's mother and daddy visited him for the first time January 8,

1943, in Greenville, Mississippi. I went to visit him on January 15th over the weekend. Helen and J.R. Underwood brought Louise to visit Buddy, and I drove back home with them. We played ``Pinch the Gray Mare'' all the way home.

George Berry and Buddy left Greenville, Mississippi by train on Sunday, February 28, for Laurenceville, Illinois. They finished their training there and received their pilot's wings. The nearest town to live was Vincinnes, Illinois. I took a leave of absence from Dr. Koonce's office, and left Carthage on April 10, 1943 to live in Vincinnes. I had been living in our department with George Berry's mother and daddy since he left. Then after he went overseas I lived with my mamma and daddy (Mr. and Mrs. Roy Murphy), and worked as a dental assistant for Dr. P.B. Koonce. I did that while George Berry was in the Air Corps.

Louise came up to Vincinnes, Illinois the following week. George Berry's mother and daddy came up too, to see George Berry and Buddy graduate and receive their silver wings. They were also commissioned second lieutenants. Then George Berry and Buddy Underwood were separated for the first time.

Louise and Buddy left on April 29, 1943 for Seberling, Florida, and we left for Columbus, Ohio. George Berry was to train there for nine

weeks to be a bomber pilot of a B-17.

I went to work for Dr. C.C. Sherburne, a heart specialist. We lived out by Ohio State University, and had an apartment in a third story attic. I had to ride a trolley into town, two miles everyday. I gave blood, for the first time, to the Red Cross and it made me sick.

We were best man and matron of honor at a wedding for Lieutenant and Mrs. William W. Trimble on June 2nd (all cotton wedding). Mrs. Trimble, his mother, came up from Monroe, Louisiana.

I left Columbia, Ohio, by train, on June 26th, and Dr. and Mrs. Koonce met me in Marshall. George Berry came home July 6th. He had been gone almost a year. Louise and Buddy were here when I arrived home.

While George Berry was home on his first furlough we were wined and dined like ``kings''. We had dinner with Mamma, Mamma Bounds, Ela V., Aunt Rosa, Aunt Ela, Mable Koonce. We made some out of town trips to see his aunt in Galveston, my sister Margie in Orange, Texas, to Henderson to see Oran West and family, to Overton to see Mr. and Mrs. Tarrey, and New London to visit Daddy. We really celebrated on July 10th when we went to a dance at the Reo Palm Isle (Mathis Ballroom) with Lt. and Mrs. A.L. Davis, Dr. and Mrs. P.R. Koonce, Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Baker, J.W.

Louise West at 26.

Teresa Hilburn of Loblolly and Louise West.

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Whitney and Hollie Fite, C.B. and Mozelle Duke, Sgt. Andrew Baker, Johnnie Fite, Syble Scott, Jane Hull and Mr. and Mrs. Joe Hull.

George Berry went to Dalhart, Texas on August 20, 1943. They were asked not to bring their wives there because of the housing conditions. I went anyway. I stayed at an old beat up hotel without any screens on the windows and an outdoor toilet.

I met a lady after I had been there three days. She told me about a friend of hers who had lost a son in the Service, and her friend was married to a dentist, Dr. F.E. Garner. She said his wife was working for him and was so depressed over losing her son that she would probably let me stay with them if I'd go to work for Dr. Garner as a dental assistant. He was about 50 years old and at the time I thought they were really old. I was about 22 or 23 years old. They were Methodist and carried me to church every Sunday. I can look back now and see how happy I made them. I started cleaning teeth and soldiers just flocked in ($5 cost).

I was pouring a cast and went to pull my wedding ring off and lost it. Months later, after I arrived back in Carthage, Dr. Garner mailed me my wedding ring which he had found. George Berry had bought me a new one in Dalhart before he left to go overseas.

All the wives of the crew left by train from Dalhart to Beelville, Illinois on October 22, 1943. George Berry and I had celebrated our sixth wedding anniversary just the day before. He was getting ready to leave to go overseas as a B-17 bomber pilot. He had one more stop to make before he was sent to England. He went overseas on the Queen Elizabeth, a big ship, with about 10,000 other boys. I was sent back to Carthage to live with Mamma and Daddy, and went back to work for Dr. Koonce. I had been gone about seven months. I had met many Air Corps wives and had traveled and gone to many parties. I didn't look forward to coming home and back to the steady grind of work six days a week. I didn't have a car. I had sold George Berry's new Plymouth for $5.25 (he'd paid $8.50 for it). I put the money into War Bonds because we couldn't buy gasoline (rationed). Food was rationed too.

They sent Buddy and Louise to Topeka, Kansas when we went to Dalhart but George Berry and Buddy went overseas together. They left the States on October 28, 1943. Louise and I came home. We thought I was pregnant but I wasn't. But she was pregnant.

Buddy was killed in action on February 22, 1944. Four months later his daughter was born (Georgie Lou Underwood). His body washed up on the shore of the English Channel after his plane

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Buddy was killed in action on February 22, 1944. Four months later his daughter was born (Georgie Lou Underwood). His body washed up on the shore of the English Channel after his plane

crashed. He was buried in England and later his body was sent to the States and buried in Odd Fellows Cemetery here. Louise's little girl was born June 19, 1944.

George Berry came home from England and called me from New York about 5 a.m. at Mamma's on June 23. This would have been the same day Buddy would have arrived back in the States. Georgie Lou was four days old that day. She had weighed about five pounds at birth.

I caught a bus and met George Berry in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and we came home by bus together. He was a first lieutenant and had flown 28 missions from December, 1943 to May, 1944. He bombed Paris, France on his last mission. His crew was in the first group to bomb Berlin, Germany.

There was a big write-up in the Life magazine about the five straight days of bombing in Germany. Buddy was killed on one of these raids. They wrote a book on George Berry and his crew called Berlin or Bust because they made it to Berlin with one engine shot out and part of their oxygen gone. They all made it home safely, and he received the Distinguished Flying Cross for this mission (February 25, 1944).

I would begin the second part of my program on leaving Carthage for Pyote Army Air Base. It would continue on to his going overseas and the fighting.

The third part would be George Berry coming home, and when the war ended.

Louise West in 1990.

Ground Observers

The following story first appeared in Loblolly in 1979. But with our telling of the home front'' during World War II, we thought the role of the Ground Observers should be included.

There is a small building in Beckville which played a part for Texans during World War II. It was used as a Ground Observation Post for reporting planes flying over the area as part of the defense against enemy air raids. Marylee Knight told us about this and helped find some people who remembered their roles with the Ground Observation Post during the war.

Mrs. Andrew Boulware

Q: Do you remember when the Observation Post was put in your yard?

A: Oh my, yes, it was during World War II.

Q: Did anyone besides Mr. Andrew work in it?

A: Andrew was made Chairman of the Post. The men of the town built it, we didn't build it. It was put on our lot because it was an open place where you could see

the planes better than any other place in town when they flew over. Andrew, of course, had a regular job and had to work so I took it over. Mrs. Mary Sparks and Mrs. Nina Wade sat together. One kept watch and the other called in the kind of plane, anything written on it and the direction they were heading.

Q: Where did you call in to?

A: We called Longview.

Q: How many years did you do this?

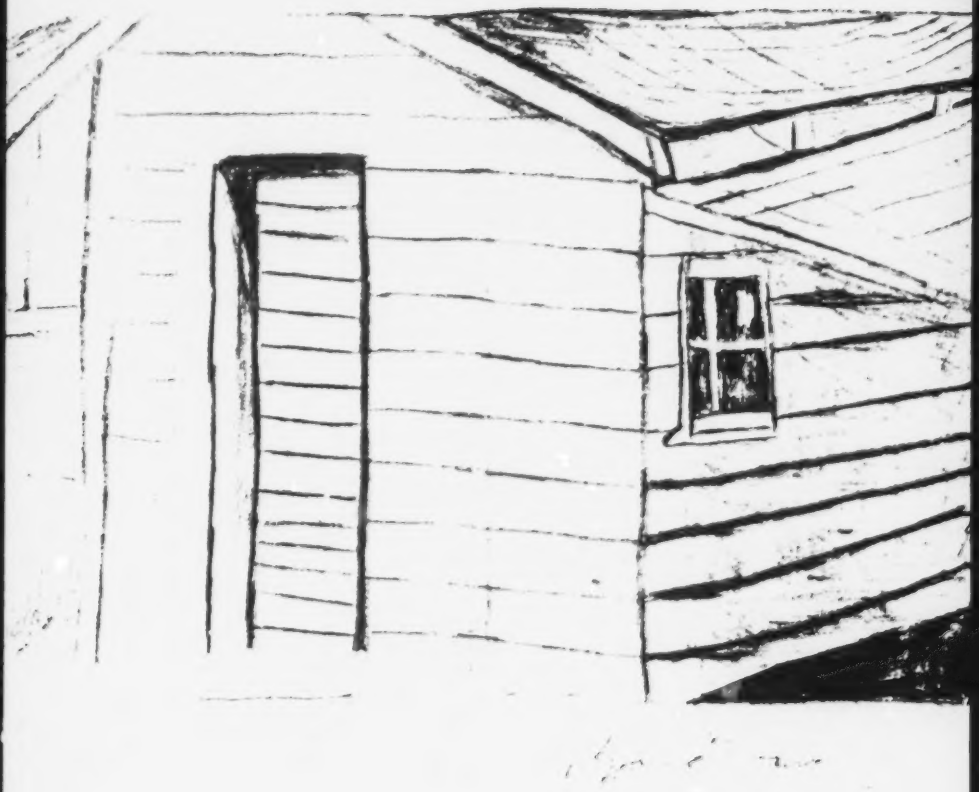
A: Oh, all during World War II. One day they had a pratice period and, oh, the place was black with planes going over. It was very interesting. I have a picture around here somewhere of Mary and Mrs. Wade sitting out there watching. You had to know the kind of plane, the way it was going and two or three other things. Those were interesting days.

Q: Do you remember who worked out there regularly besides you, Mrs. Mary and Mrs. Wade?

A: They always worked two at a time and they were there every day. The building has a dirt floor in it. We had a telephone out there, the wires are still there.

Q: Did you have a heater out there in the winter?

A: I don't remember. Did I say we did it all during the war? Didn't the war last a



long time? I guess we didn't do it that long, either, but we did it for a good while. Andrew was just the Chairman of it. He didn't work with it. He didn't have the time. I made all of the appointments. I saw that the people were there when they were supposed to be, and if they weren't, I got a substitute. There were not many times that the people were not there when they were supposed to be. We all enjoyed it. We felt we were doing our part for our country.

Q: Were any written records kept here at the post?

A: We just called the information to Longview, they kept the records.

Q: Were there other observation posts in Carthage or the other towns around here?

A: We called Longview, then they called Elysian Fields, then from there they carried it on to Shreveport.

Vernon & Dee Harris

It was the early part of World War II, in the Fall of '43 when the observers post building was built.

The government suggested that we build this post. The purpose of it was that if any suspicious plane flew over, whoever minding the post was to phone Barksdale Air Force

Base.

I never did sit out there and listen but Dee did. As long as the post was up I can't remember a plane coming over.

The post was only used for about six months. I furnished the shingles and the money was made up for the lumber, and Joe Bill Smith built it.

Several people sat in the post during the day but it was not used at night.

Gladys Nicholson

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Gladys Nicholson is a friend and neighbor who shared her memories of World War II on the Home Front with us. She was the first person we interviewed on the project and she got us off to a good start.

Q: Where did your family live and where were you born?

A: I was born in Dallas, Texas.

Q: Where were your parents born?

A: My parents came from the Austin area.

Q: Do you remember the attack on Pearl Harbor?

A: Yes I do, at the time I was duck hunting at Port Aranyes. I came in and realized what had happened. I think we were aware of things happening to out country, but the shock was tremendous.

Q: How did the war change life at home?

A: There was a certain unity, and love of God and country, that I could feel

even though I was young. I felt everyone was together, everyone didn't agree with President Roosevelt, but we did listen to his bright side chat and came together as one.

Q: How did ya'll ration things?

A: The first ration was of rubber tires, gasoline, sugar, coffee, and I believe pineapples, chocolate, and a shortage of silk hose, and of many things.

Q: Were there any of your friends or relatives in the service?

A: Yes my brother was in the service he was in the Navy. At the time he was going to the University of Texas in Austin, and I went with him when he enlisted in Corpus Christi, and of course he was the nearest and dearest thing to me. He was the only relative I had in the service.

Q: How did school change?

A: I was already out of high school. I was working in Austin.

Q: Could you tell us more about paper and metal collections?

A: We saved paper and metal of all kinds there was quite a shortage in fact. It seemed we saved everything.

Q: What about patriotic efforts?

A: People were very patriotic. The music was some of the best of my life. At the

time it all had a feeling of my country and my God to be together.

Q: When the war was over how did things change and life get back to normal?

A: Pretty well everything came back together again we continued to work. The boys came home, my brother came home of course everyone had someone near and dear and he was the closet thing I had.

helping strap him in before he took off. When the strafing began I forgot about the pilot. I went to the end of the wing and jumped on the foxhole. But that pilot beat me to the foxhole.

Our unit got a Presidential Unit Citation after the German, attack on Thelepthe on January 15, 1943. That's because all the attacking German JU-88 bombers were shot down. For the presentation of the Citation there were all kinds of generals there. Before that you'd use the latrine where you were. But then we had to dig lots of latrines. That's party because Margaret Burke White, the famous photographer for Life Magazine was there for the ceremony. But there was one duty none of us minded. That was KP for then we got all we wanted to eat.

After the German surrender in North Africa we participated in the only victory that was made by the Air Corps entirely. That was at Pantelleria, an island between North Africa and Sicily. That was a volcanic island we captured. Then the 99th Fighter Squadron operated from our squadron facility. That was the first fighter squadron with Black pilots.

Then I was stationed at Pantelleria. They had an underground hanger there. I remember. Then after the invasion of Sicily we went in and set up a

Leila Belle LaGrone

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Leila Belle LaGrone is a legend in Panola County for devoting her life in the service of others. In retirement she seems to be busier than any other time of her life. But the days during World War II was also a period of non-stop activity. We visited with her as she shared her remembrances of that time of conflict and of caring.

Q: Please tell us about your life before the war?

A: Well, I was Leila Belle Stone and I was born and reared in Panola County in the community called Brooks, out towards Beckville. My father was a Baptist Minister and we lived on a farm and worked on it just like everyone else did. My father rode horse back to churches all over Panola County. I grew up there. I was born in 1909 which makes me now almost 82. I have retired twice and I'm working harder now than I ever did, because I am dedicating all my time to other people and I never am out of someone asking for something. I'm glad to be needed. I

married Grady LaGrone. His family was from the east side of the county, mine was from the west. We did not know each other until we were teachers. I went to Deadwood, his home community, to teach and I met him there and of course, I was swept off my feet. Before that year was out we were married. We have one daughter, who was a career teacher, and she has already retired. My daughter's name is Catheline LaGrone and she married Charles Tuttle. Charles was a World War II hero. They are both retired and live on the family farm that we built in Deadwood. They have two children, my grandchildren. My granddaughter, Kathy Nicks is also a career teacher. My grandson was named after his father, Charles Tuttle. He has a Ph.D. and is teaching in Dallas. Charles and his wife have two little girls. And that is my whole family.

My husband and I moved to Central Texas because jobs were more plentiful for couples there. We lived and taught in Rosebud, Texas for four years. Then we came back to Panola County and went to Deadwood and started teaching over there.

Q: How old were you when you started teaching?

A: I was just as young as you could get a certificate. I finished school at Brooks

Community. I went to SFA and graduated there, then went on to teaching afterward. I was 18 and I taught in public schools for 46 years, and Panola College called me and asked if I would teach for one year but I ended up staying four years. After that I retired for good and started doing volunteer community work.

Q: Do you remember the attack at Pearl Harbor?

A: I remember it exactly, Yes! We were not in Carthage that Sunday. We were teaching our last year at Deadwood. We didn't know it was going to be our last year at Deadwood, but the war took care of that. It was a Sunday afternoon and we often came to Carthage to watch movies after church. We were on the river bridge with the radio on when the first flash came. The President came on, and we almost wrecked the car it was such a shock. Nobody knew anything except what that announcement said. It told about the ghastly activities from the Japanese bombers and what they had done to Pearl Harbor, and the state of war existed now. Like everyone else, we were just two people caught in the middle of something we couldn't do anything about.

Q: Did it change your life at home?

A: Indeed it did. In a few months time they were organizing the whole country,

and teachers in every community were the leaders of the organizations. Everything had to be rationed. Sugar, you could have so many pounds per person in a family, and that was that, unless you could prove that because of health or something you had to have more. But you had to go to the Ration Board to plead your case. You had to have Stamps to get certain things and teacher in every community had to issue Ration Books. Every person in a family had to have a Ration Book because you bought groceries and supplies strictly by the Ration Books. The first people to be provided with supplies were the military and army, and what was left had to be divided among the people at home. We started immediately working on the Ration Books, trying to get them out in time. It took all spring to get all the books issued out, and of course, school ended that spring.

The Carthage Trustees approached us to come to Carthage because all of the young man teachers immediately were in the army. Mr. LaGrone was just over the age of being drafted and they really needed Mr. LaGrone to come and teach. They really didn't want me, but Mr. LaGrone would not leave without me. This bombing happened on the 7th of December in 1941. And the early summer of 1942 we moved to Carthage and started teaching

Ashley Wilkerson of Loblolly and
Leila Belle La Grone.

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there. The Superintendent volunteered to serve in the war. So my husband was elected temporary Superintendent and stayed there for four years.

Q: Did you have friends or relatives in the service?

A: I had two nephews and those poor boys had their lives so torn up over it. They were experts and lived through it, they were tough enough to stand it. But when the war was over they came back, and neither ever married because their lives were ruined because they had seen so much terror that nothing was ever beautiful to them again.

Q: Did you keep in touch with ex-students that were in the war?

A: Well, I did while they were at the war. I wrote them and kept them up with all the news and excitement of their school. I thought of them all as ``my boys''. Physically I did not have any boys, but emotionally I had about 10,000, and they were all very special to me.

Q: After the war, how long did it take for your life to get back to normal?

A: Well, it did take some time. A new car and things such as that were hard to come by, even when the war was over. But eventually, things got better.

Q: How has your life

been since then?

A: After the war my husband and I still taught for a while, then retired. He died and I have always kept myself busy doing things for our community. Now I am helping to make the old county jail in Carthage a historical museum. I still live in Carthage, because in my heart I feel that it is the right place for me.

Rayford Bearden

Rayford Bearden lives just across the road from the school in the house once lived in by Monroe Brannon, the first one we ever interviewed for Loblolly back in 1973. We think the house has a good influence on people, for Mrs. Bearden turned out to be a good story teller too.

Q: Mrs. Bearden where were you born?

A: Jacksonville, Texas in 1918.

Q: Could you tell us a little about your family?

A: My dad was a farmer. We lived in Jacksonville until I was about two years old. Then we moved to Welch, Texas, until , I was about fifteen years old. Then we moved back to Jacksonville. I lived there until about 1957. I had five brothers, no sisters.

Q: Where did you go to school in Jacksonville?

A: It was called Joe Wright then, but it's called Northside now.

Q: You graduated from there?

A: No, I finished in Cold Springs when we moved out into the country.

Q: What year was it when you graduated?

A: Well, I have to think about it. It must have been 1934. I got married in 1935.

Q: Then you moved to Gary?

A: No, I moved to Shreveport. My husband was working for a grocery company. We lived there from 1957 to 1980. Then we moved to Gary.

Q: Do you remember the attack on Pearl Harbor?

A: Nothing more than we were at home when it happened. I didn't have any immediate family there, but later on I had three brothers in the service. Two of them were wounded, one was not, but they all survived.

Q: How did the war change life at home?

A: Well living on a farm you don't really notice. Except for the fact that some things were rationed like sugar and flour. Normally on a farm you raise what you eat. It really did not change our lives all that much.

Q: Did you have any friends or relatives in the service besides your brothers?

A: I'm sure there were friends, but I don't remember.

Q: Do you remember how the war changed

people around you?

A: Well, many people had sons, or husband fighting, and it was very hard for them. I know it was for my mother because she had three sons.

Q: How did things change at home?

A: Well, I was a house wife, so it didn't change that much.

Q: Did you buy bonds or war stamps?

A: We bought bonds.

Q: Were things rationed?

A: Well linens were rationed, sheets and towels, things like that. Sugar was rationed. Meat and cheeses were also rationed. Really and truly we didn't suffer from it that much. I was married at that time, and had two small children.

Q: How did things change after the war?

A: Well my husband worked for the grocery company, and it didn't change that much. The rationing ended pretty quick.

Q: How did you feel towards the war?

A: Well, war is necessary some times. I feel that. If we have to fight for our freedom we should. Freedom is never free, it has to be paid for.

Q: Were there any paper or metal collections?

A: Well, the community had collections where we lived in

Jacksonville.

Q: Were there any other patriotic efforts?

A: No, we lived on a farm and didn't do that much.

Q: How has life been since then?

A: Pretty good. Everybody has their ups and downs.

Anthony Stallone of Loblolly and Rayford Bearden.

Les Gould

We met Les Gould through our mutual friend, Jake Howland. Les is not a native East Texan but lives here now after retiring from United Gas. He is the first person we met who grew up in Waterproof, Louisiana. He shared his experiences with the 8th Air Force as a tail gunner on a B - 17 in the later stages of World War II. We found he has a keen memory of people and events which took place in the skies over Europe almost 50 years ago.

I was born December 15, 1925 in Oak George, Louisiana. That's a little town just south of the Arkansas border in West Carrol Parish. I had only one brother. But one grandmother had 13 kids so I had lots of aunts and uncles. That was on my mother's side. I started school in the first grade in Waterproof, Louisiana. That's right on the Mississippi River about 30 miles north of Natchez, Mississippi. I went all through the 11th grade there and graduated in 1943. My only working was in a grocery store in the summer time. That was before I graduated.

Right after I graduated I went to summer school at Louisiana Tech in

July. Prior to that I tried to get into the Navy Aviation Cadet program. I went to New Orleans for testing but didn't get in. Then I went into the service on December 23, 1943. About a month prior to that I went over to Monroe, Louisiana to take the Air Corps Aviation Cadet test. I passed it and so I got into that instead of being drafted. I was eligible for the draft anytime after December 15 (my birthday).

So I went into the service with a friend of mine. We went to Camp Beauregard close to Alexandria, Louisiana two days before Christmas. It was rainy and muddy. We just stayed there two or three days. We were in formation once and the sergeant told us to turn in our knives. My mother had given me a little gold knife and inch and a half long as a keepsake. I handed that in. So when we came to the time to leave I went over to try to get that knife back. That sergeant was asleep early in the morning. But he pointed to a big tub in the room full of knives and told me to get mine. I thought, ``Forget it,'' and left it there. But that taught me a lesson to be careful of keepsakes.

Then I went to Gulfport, Mississippi for basic training. I think that lasted six weeks without pass. Then we took a test to see if we could be a bombardier, a pilot, or a navigator, or whatever. I didn't get

Les Gould's crew L to R, rear: John Christensen, bombardier; Kenneth Whisenant, co-pilot; John F. Byron, pilot; David Capland, navigator; Gaza Karsia, flight engineer. L to R, front: Chris Caery, radio operator; Paul Heartly, togaleer; Les Gould, tail gunner; Larry Courneyea, ball turret gunner; Freddie Sanseveri, waist gunner.

into those so I volunteered for the gunnery program. From there I was sent to gunnery school at Las Vegas, Nevada. That's where I got my first flight on a B - 17. The first flight was kind of hairy. We got engine trouble and were flying low over the desert to get back to the base. We had developed engine trouble right after we took off. But they wouldn't let us return to the base we took off from. They made us go to Indian Springs, not too far from there. We threw everything out of the plane to make it lighter. I was standing in the bomb bay, in the catwalk, and they'd hand me stuff which I would drop out of the plane. We dropped machine guns and anything else to make the plane lighter. But we got back to the base o.k. Some officers met the plane coming in a jeep. I jumped out of the plane, and they had the pilot of our plane standing at attention, chewing him out for some reason. Anyway, after a couple of hours, I guess the plane was fixed, and they made us fly the plane back to Las Vegas. So that was a hairy first flight for me on a B - 17. That was in June, 1944. But I can't remember exactly how long gunnery school lasted. I got sick with pneumonia, or something, and had to drop back from my class a week.

Anyway, after I finished gunnery school, I was given leave to go home for about nine days or so. Then I went to

Lincoln, Nebraska. That's where our crew was assembled to start flight training. I don't remember if we picked up a plane there and went to Rapid City, South Dakota or got the plane there. The training was for the crew to learn to work together. In October, 1944 we finished our flight training and we got another leave. I went home and then returned to Lincoln, Nebraska.

From Lincoln we went to Goose Bay, Labrador, and then flew on to Iceland, and finally to England on a B - 17. On November 6, 1944 we flew our first mission. Our base was near Bury - St. Edmonds. We were with the 388th Bomb Group, 563rd Bomber Squadron. And my 35th and last mission was on April 9,1945.

The first mission was to Duisburg, Germany. Most of the missions were fairly routine. One time we had German fighters attack us. It was on a mission to Hamburg. There were three fighters coming in from the rear. I was the tail gunner. I called up the co - pilot and told him there were three fighters coming up on us from the rear. I said they could be P - 51's (American). He replied, ``Watch `em.'' I watched them and about a minute later I told him, ``They're still coming.'' He just said, ``Watch `em.'' And they kept getting closer and closer and they started shooting. And about that time everybody started

shooting back at them. One of them came up, and he looked close enough to touch, and he turned his belly up where the armor plate was and just did a roll, but my guns had jammed. You were just supposed to fire a short burst and quit. And I was so excited and held the trigger down. I had one the old style wooden trays to hold the ammunition. Bullets wouldn't go into the guns fast enough. You just had to take a short burst. That's really the only time we saw German fighters. I can't recall that they hit anything. We didn't hit them either. We just scared each other.

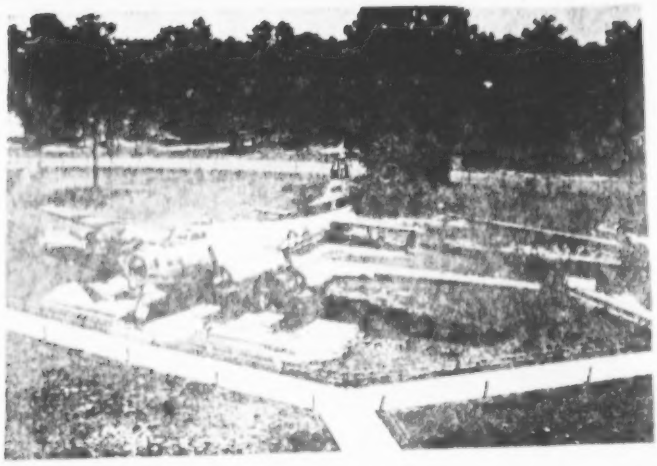
I was the tail gunner on the B - 17. The way I got to be the tail gunner was that Larry Courneyea was a little bigger than I was. He wanted to be the tail gunner. I told him I wanted the job too, and that we'd leave it up to the pilot. Larry was another gunner on the crew. So the pilot said I would be the tail gunner. That upset Larry who was from Manhattan, New York. His favorite expression was, ``Sam, you made the pants too long,'' whatever that meant. He was an ex - boxer. One time he used his boxing on me.

That flight where we met the German fighters was against Hamburg on December 31, 1944. We ran into flak on most of our missions except for the one to Ansback. We dropped down to 10,000 feet that day.

Usually we flew at 29,000 - 30,000 feet. But that one day they knew there wouldn't be any flak. I think we were after a rail yard. The last mission I made was to Munich. That was ironic because that's where Hitler got his start. But it wasn t a bad raid at all. There wasn't even much flak.

One time we were going toward a target, I don't know which one it was, but the co - pilot saw heavy flak up front. He called out, ``We will really catch it today,'' and the guys on the crew came back on the microphone and told him to ``shut up.'' We didn't want to hear that. One of the hairy experiences I did have on a mission was when my oxygen mask came loose. It came unclipped as it wasn't adjusted tight enough. And I passed out from a lack of oxygen-I didn't know it as I was just sleeping. I was thinking about how cold my feet were. The next thing I knew was the waist gunner was back in the tail shaking me and giving me emergency oxygen. If he hadn't come back there I wouldn't be here today. It was easy to go to sleep that way. You just didn't realize what was happening.

My feet were the only things to get cold on the plane. We had electric flying suits which took care of most of the body except the feet. They would sting from being so cold. When we were flying at 30,000 feet it was unbelievably cold outside-way below



The B-17 flown on some of their missions by Les Gould's crew. The "Gremlin's Hideout" survived the war. It can now be seen at the Air Force Armorment Museum, Elgin Air Force Base, Florida.

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zero. And that made it cold inside the plane.

We had some other hairy experiences. One time we had a 1,000 pound bomb under each wing and not in the bomb bay for some reason. We took off to join the other planes for the mission, but the engines wouldn't handle the load or something. They ultimately had to feather two of the engines. So we turned around and headed back to England. The pilot wouldn't drop the bombs in the English Channel because he thought the British would start shooting at us. So we got back over England looking for an old airport or someplace to land. The pilot found one. We were all braced in the radio room. That's where you go for a crash landing. One person sat between another's legs, back to back. He landed us smooth, no problem at all. I don't know if the bombs were alive or not. They must have been or everybody would not have been so scared. So when the plane landed we got out and made a run for it. We flipped a coin to see who would guard it while the others went to get lunch. I lost so I had to stay at the plane.

Another time we were over Germany, and that time we were just throwing out the strips of aluminum foil. That was done to confuse the German radar. We had engine trouble again, and the plane went into a dive because the pilot went vertigo. He couldn't tell up from

down.
So I tried to jump out from the tail of the plane. But the force of the plane going down didn't let me move. So I was like frozen in place. About that time the co-pilot and pilot together were able to pull the plane level.

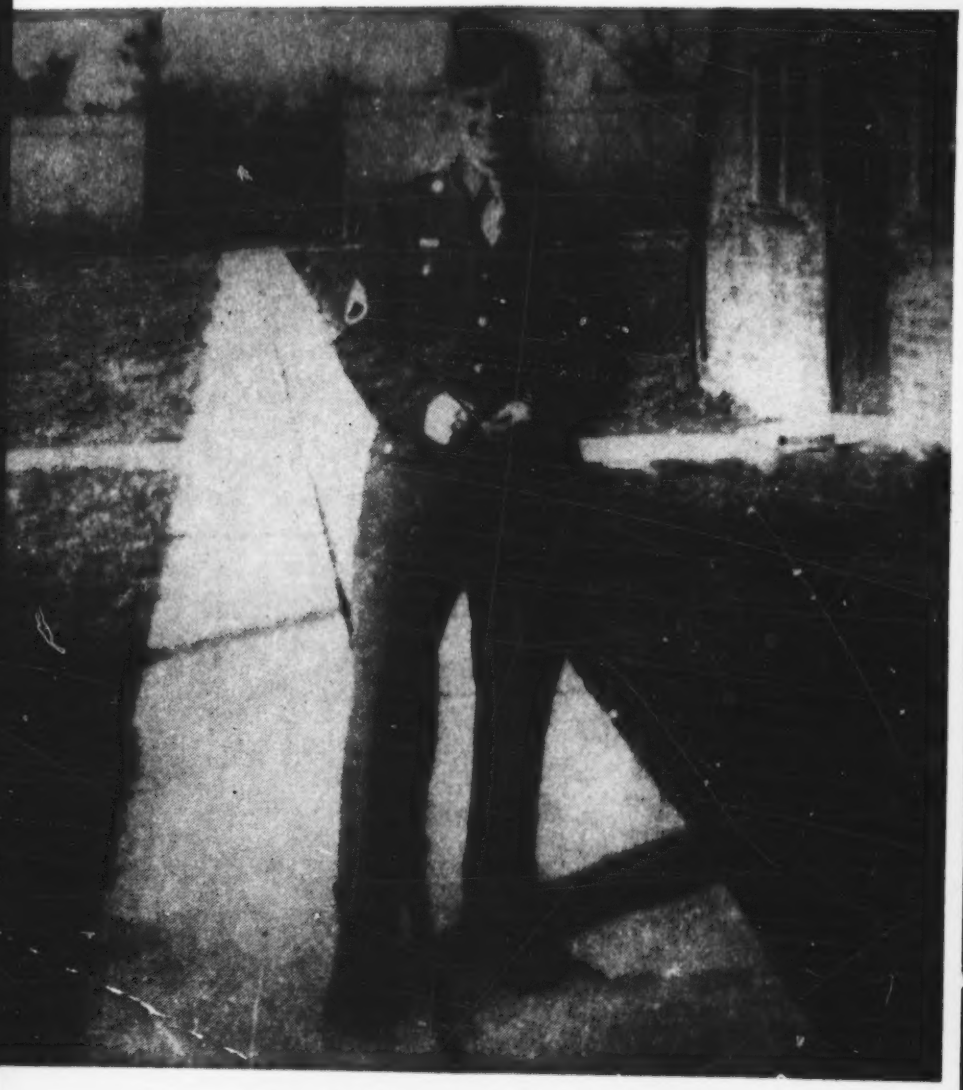
We were getting short on gas so we had to land in Belgium. It was after D-Day. So we spent the night in Belgium. They fed us. We were close to Brussels. We went to a cafe there and I drank something that tasted like soda pop. I drank two or three bottles of it. I went to stand up and the floor was just going round and round. The next morning when we got on the truck I had the headache of my life. I got on the plane and went to sleep. That stuff was not a soda pop. It must have been some kind of wine, but tasted like strawberry soda pop.

Many of our targets were rail centers. They called them marshelling yards. We were trying to disrupt their transportation system. One time we went after the submarine docks at Hamburg. We went to Berlin but due to some mix-up we dropped our bombs elsewhere. We dropped them in a ``cabbage patch.'' That's what they called it when you dropped your bombs in a place not originally planned. There were a lot of them.

The reason we didn't encounter more German fighters in the later part of the war was that their fighter force had been

so weakened by losses. That's what we were told. They suffered from the damage done to the plane factories by our bombing. And we were knocking out their rails so they couldn't move stuff.

I was the tail gunner on all our missions. There were ten in the crew of a B-17. But many times we only went with nine. I went with the same crew for the first 33 of my 35 missions. They finished two missions ahead of me so to get my 35 missions done (required before going home to the U.S.) I filled in with another crew for my last two missions. I finished my last mission on April 9, 1945. Larry Courneyea was upset about not being the tail gunner and would go on sick call when he felt like not going on a mission. So he was even behind me on finishing his missions. He still had four or five missions to go. Go he flew with the same crew I did on my last two missions to get partly done. Then he flew two more missions with them and on the second one ran into fighters and they had to bail out. He had to be pushed out of the plane. He broke his ankle when he landed in Belgium. He got to our base in England, and he and I were walking across the field. We met the Commanding Officer, and he said, ``Larry, come here a minute.'' Then he continued, ``Larry, you don't have to finish your missions. ``He had



Les Gould -- Staff Sergeant

about three left, but could go home. Larry was so excited he jumped up and down with joy even with a bad ankle. He had been unhappy during our tour with me as tail gunner. That meant he ended up as the ball turret gunner on the under side of the B-17. It was an awkward position to fly in and uncomfortable. But he rode with the waist gunners most of the time because he didn't have to get into the ball turret unless we were in a danger area.

I received the Air Medal and four Oak Leaf Clusters which meant five of them. And I also received a Good Conduct Medal and the campaign medals of the time and place. By the time of my tour they had stopped giving the Distinguished Flying Cross, for completing 25 missions. They said it was less dangerous in the later stages of the war.

One time we were coming off a target and there was a group going in. And I saw two of the planes run into each other and just explode in the air. Before that we saw two run together and go in the English Channel. We flew very close in formation at times so things happened. It only took a small mistake. The pilot had to be good. Our pilot, John Byron from Austin, was good. We had the utmost faith in him.

I visited a friend from Waterproof at another base while I was there in England. He was having

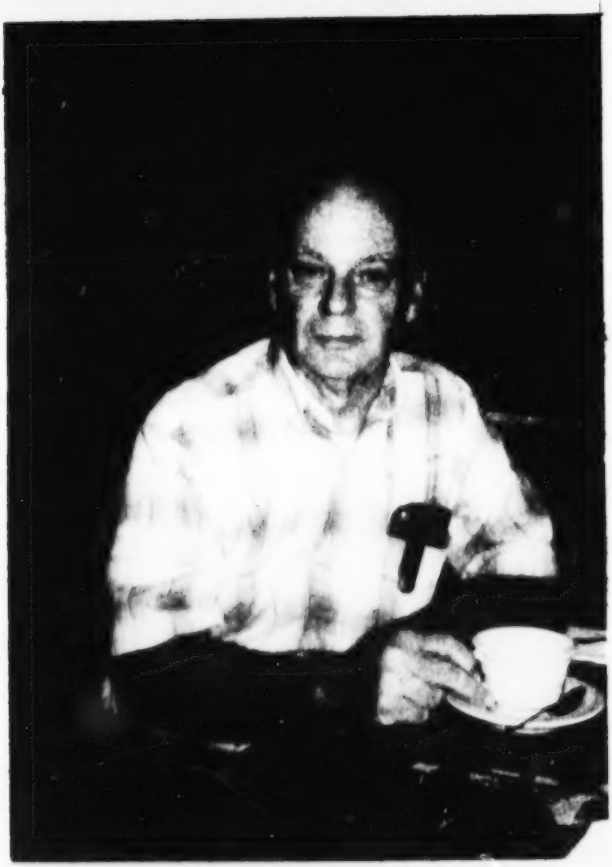
trouble with his pilot. His pilot went over the target one time, in Germany and he chickened out. He avoided the target. He didn't go over it. They grounded him and made him the K.P. officer in their mess hall.

I was headed back to the U.S.A. within a week of finishing up my 35 missions. They put us on a train in the snow to get to the port in England. We were on a ship named the ``Marine Devil'' half way home when the war on Europe ended. We landed in Boston then went on to Greensborough, North Carolina. Then I went on leave for two weeks, returned to Greensborough, and then was sent to Biloxi, Mississippi. We were with the base fire department doing nothing.

Then a group of gunners were assigned to the engineers and sent to fight forest fires in Idaho and Washington. That was because the Japanese were sending balloons with flares attached over the U.S. in order to start forest fires. We had some training on fight fires. All you really need is a shovel in order to put dirt on the fire. They sent us to Rapid City, South Dakota as our base as fire fighters. Some other fire fighters were conscientious objectors to war. That was their service instead of going in the military.

I finally got out of the service in October, 1945. I was discharged in San Diego. I then returned to

Waterford, Louisiana as a civilian. I went back to school at Louisiana Tech. Then I went to Okinawa for work. I met my wife before I went overseas and we married on my return in October, 1949. Then we went to Louisiana Tech and graduated in 1952. Then I worked for newspapers and my wife taught. I went to work for United Gas in 1955 and stayed with them about 31 years. I returned in March, 1986. We moved to Panola County in August, 1989 after admiring this part of the country for a long time. We wanted to get out in the country to live and accomplish our dreams. We have two grown children. My daughter is the elder and lives in Marshall, and my son lives in Longview.



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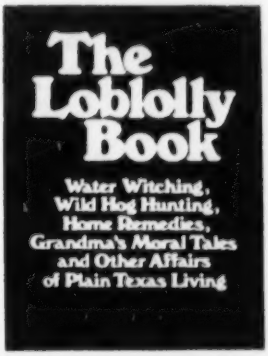
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